

NTIA Tribal Consultation

January 13, 2026

Moderators: Angela Thi Bennett & Margaret Gutierrez

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00:00:23.590 --> 00:00:31.409

Maci Morin: All thanks for joining us today. Just wanna give folks just a minute or so to join, and then we will get started.

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00:00:52.230 --> 00:01:04.250

Arielle Roth: Hello, and welcome to NTIA's Tribal Consultation. My name is Arielle Roth, and I serve as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator.

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00:01:04.360 --> 00:01:08.139

Arielle Roth: I'd like to thank the esteemed Tribal leaders who have joined us today.

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00:01:08.340 --> 00:01:16.520

Arielle Roth: This consultation underscores our shared commitment to advancing connectivity and addressing the unique needs of Tribal communities.

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00:01:16.610 --> 00:01:27.649

Arielle Roth: As we announced last year, NTIA is reforming its broadband programs, including its Tribal programs, to promote flexibility and better align NTIA's grant opportunities.

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00:01:27.710 --> 00:01:37.110

Arielle Roth: Our goal is to ensure that every taxpayer dollar stretches as far as possible to achieve universal connectivity across the nation, including on Tribal lands.

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00:01:37.130 --> 00:01:51.079

Arielle Roth: The insights you bring to this important discussion represent the next critical step in shaping the policies that best serve Tribal needs. Your feedback and your ideas are essential as we work together to maximize the impact of our initiatives.

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00:01:51.190 --> 00:01:59.879

Arielle Roth: During these consultations, we are looking for your input on how to restructure the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and Native Entity Grant Program.

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00:02:00.080 --> 00:02:23.390

Arielle Roth: What are the broadband needs of your community? How can these federal programs advance or amplify other funding programs, including commitments you have received from BEAD? Your insights will guide us in the creation of our next Notice of Funding Opportunities as we structure these programs to better serve your communities and reduce administrative burdens and red tape for Tribal governments. I encourage you to speak up.

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00:02:23.390 --> 00:02:26.169

Arielle Roth: Submit written comments and engage with our staff.

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00:02:26.310 --> 00:02:32.820
Arielle Roth: All of us at NTIA appreciate your dedication and commitment to advancing broadband in your communities.

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00:02:33.150 --> 00:02:39.460
Arielle Roth: I look forward to our continued partnership and the meaningful progress we will achieve together. Thank you.

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00:02:54.160 --> 00:03:11.500
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Assistant Secretary Roth, for those opening remarks. Hello, everyone, and welcome to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's NTIA Tribal Consultation Session for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity and Native Entities Grant Program. My name is Margaret Gutierrez, and I appreciate you taking the time to join us today.

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00:03:11.890 --> 00:03:25.179
Margaret Gutierrez: The primary purpose of this session is to hear from elected Tribal leaders or their designee for input on the third round of the TBCP grant program and the Native Entities Grant Program funded through the Digital Equity Act of 2021 set aside for Native Entities.

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00:03:25.890 --> 00:03:43.239
Margaret Gutierrez: To start, I'll introduce myself and my colleague, the speakers for today's session. Again, my name is Margaret Gutierrez, I'm an enrolled member with the Citizen Pottawatomie Nation, and I am Division Chief of the TBCP program. I'll be joined by Angela Thi Bennett, who serves as Director of the Digital Equity Act of 2021.

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00:03:43.420 --> 00:04:01.979
Margaret Gutierrez: Together, we'll highlight two of the major funding programs under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or IIJA, and we'll provide an overview of the TBCP grant program, while Angela will provide an overview of Native Entities. We will detail the requirements for each program and share important considerations for Tribal communities applying for these programs. Let's get started.

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00:04:02.340 --> 00:04:13.450
Margaret Gutierrez: First, we'll review the agenda for today's session. We begin today with a brief welcome to open our session. Next, we'll provide an overview of the TBCP grant program, followed by an overview of the Native Entities Grant Program.

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00:04:13.630 --> 00:04:18.550
Margaret Gutierrez: These sections will give a shared understanding of each program's purpose, goals, and requirements.

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00:04:18.640 --> 00:04:32.509
Margaret Gutierrez: After that, we'll move into our government-to-government dialogue, which is the core of today's discussion. During this time, we'll focus on several key topics, including program design and reform, alignment with the BEAD program, and ways to maximize impact and use of funds.

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00:04:32.580 --> 00:04:42.930

Margaret Gutierrez: We'll also discuss reducing administrative burden, technology advancements, broadband adoption challenges, and effective models and best practices. This portion will conclude with time for additional feedback.

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00:04:43.680 --> 00:04:53.440

Margaret Gutierrez: We'll then review next steps, outlining what comes after today's discussion, and how feedback will be used moving forward. We appreciate your time and participation, and we look forward to a productive conversation.

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00:04:54.000 --> 00:04:56.890

Margaret Gutierrez: Now let's review the current grant programs under IIJA.

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00:04:58.430 --> 00:05:13.440

Margaret Gutierrez: This slide provides a high-level overview of key Tribal broadband opportunities established through IIJA. Collectively, IIJA created several major grant programs that significantly expanded resources available to Tribal nations and Native Entities to improve broadband connectivity across Indian Country.

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00:05:13.630 --> 00:05:16.369

Margaret Gutierrez: First is the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.

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00:05:16.460 --> 00:05:31.879

Margaret Gutierrez: This program was expanded through IIJA in December of 2021. TBCP provides grants to expand both access to and adoption of broadband services on Tribal lands. Eligible uses include infrastructure deployment, remote learning, telework, and telehealth resources.

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00:05:31.880 --> 00:05:43.049

Margaret Gutierrez: In total, TBCP represents \$3 billion in funding, \$1 billion originally provided through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, or CAA, and an additional \$2 billion provided through IIJA.

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00:05:43.410 --> 00:05:45.880

Margaret Gutierrez: Second is the Native Entities Grant Program.

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00:05:46.250 --> 00:05:58.199

Margaret Gutierrez: Established under the Digital Equity Act. This program is designed specifically to support Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations in addressing broadband issues and use and adoption challenges.

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00:05:58.290 --> 00:06:06.490

Margaret Gutierrez: The focus here extends beyond infrastructure to include digital skills, affordability, and community-driven solutions that meet the unique needs of Native communities.

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00:06:06.750 --> 00:06:17.909

Margaret Gutierrez: Finally, the BEAD program, or Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, provides \$42.45 billion nationwide for broadband planning, deployment, mapping, equity, and adoption activities.

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00:06:18.080 --> 00:06:30.230

Margaret Gutierrez: While BEAD funding flows through states and territories, including the District of Columbia, it represents a major opportunity for Tribal engagement, coordination, and partnership to ensure Tribal needs are reflected in statewide broadband efforts.

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00:06:30.410 --> 00:06:38.570

Margaret Gutierrez: Together, these programs form the core federal investment framework supporting broadband connectivity, digital equity, and economic opportunity in Tribal communities.

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00:06:38.720 --> 00:06:44.370

Margaret Gutierrez: The next few slides will give us a detailed overview of the requirements of the TBCP and Native Entities Grant Program.

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00:06:46.280 --> 00:06:48.879

Margaret Gutierrez: First, we'll review the TBCP grant program.

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00:06:50.520 --> 00:07:00.830

Margaret Gutierrez: This slide outlines who is eligible to apply under TBCP, as defined in the statute. Section 905AA under CAA specifies a broad set of Tribal serving Entities.

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00:07:00.830 --> 00:07:13.879

Margaret Gutierrez: These include Tribal governments and Tribal colleges and universities, as well as Tribal organizations. Eligibility also extends to the Department of Hawaiian Homelands when applying on behalf of the Native Hawaiian community, including Native Hawaiian education programs.

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00:07:14.020 --> 00:07:27.880

Margaret Gutierrez: Finally, Alaska Native corporations, as defined under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, are also eligible. Together, these categories are intended to ensure flexibility and inclusive access for Tribal and Native communities seeking to expand broadband connectivity.

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00:07:28.650 --> 00:07:30.850

Margaret Gutierrez: Now let's move on to eligible lands.

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00:07:30.980 --> 00:07:43.809

Margaret Gutierrez: Eligible lands include and are defined by Section 905A13 of the Act, as any land located within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, Pueblo, or rancheria, or a former reservation within Oklahoma.

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00:07:44.240 --> 00:08:02.390

Margaret Gutierrez: Any land not located within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, Pueblo, or rancheria, to the title to which is held in trust by the

United States for the benefit of an Indian Tribe or an individual Indian, by an Indian Tribe or an individual Indian subject to restriction against alienation under laws of the United States, or by a dependent Indian community.

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00:08:03.010 --> 00:08:09.260

Margaret Gutierrez: Any land located within a region established pursuant to Section 7A of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

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00:08:09.880 --> 00:08:25.170

Margaret Gutierrez: Hawaiian homelands, as defined in Section 801 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996, 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.

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00:08:25.170 --> 00:08:30.360

Margaret Gutierrez: Where the financial assistance and social service programs are provided to Indians because of their status as Indians.

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00:08:33.890 --> 00:08:50.780

Margaret Gutierrez: In terms of eligible uses, TBCP grant funds may support broadband infrastructure deployment, such as building and supporting carrier-neutral submarine cable landing stations, as well as affordable broadband programs, including providing free or reduced cost service and preventing the disconnection of existing broadband service.

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00:08:51.010 --> 00:09:03.140

Margaret Gutierrez: In addition, eligible uses extend to distance learning, telehealth, digital inclusion efforts, and broadband adoption activities. It's important to note that no more than 2% of the grant funds may be used for administrative purposes.

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00:09:03.290 --> 00:09:12.999

Margaret Gutierrez: There are also requirements around equitable distribution. Grant funds are awarded on an equitable basis to eligible Entities, and at least 3% of total funding is set aside for the benefit of Native Hawaiians.

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00:09:13.740 --> 00:09:28.590

Margaret Gutierrez: Finally, there are clear timelines for committing and spending the funds. Eligible Entities must commit their grant funds within 180 days of receipt in line with their approved application, and the funds must be spent within 4 years unless an extension is granted by the Assistant Secretary under specific guidelines.

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00:09:28.610 --> 00:09:34.590

Margaret Gutierrez: Overall, these requirements are intended to support effective use of funds, ensure equity, and promote timely deployment.

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00:09:34.680 --> 00:09:39.180

Margaret Gutierrez: Now, I will pass it over to Angela to provide an overview on the Native Entities Grant Program.

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00:09:39.790 --> 00:09:55.069

Angela Thi Bennett: Thank you, Margaret. Hello, everyone. As Margaret mentioned earlier, my name is Angela Thi Bennett, and I serve as the Director of the Digital Equity Act of 2021 grant programs. I'm pleased to be here with you today.

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00:09:55.470 --> 00:10:00.920

Angela Thi Bennett: With that, I'll turn to an overview of the Native Entities Grant Program.

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00:10:04.480 --> 00:10:16.930

Angela Thi Bennett: The Digital Equity Act of 2021 includes specific set-asides of funding for the Native Entities Grant Program within two major grant programs administered by NTIA.

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00:10:17.110 --> 00:10:23.949

Angela Thi Bennett: the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, and the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program.

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00:10:24.770 --> 00:10:44.420

Angela Thi Bennett: Under the Capacity Grant Program, the statute requires that not less than 5% of funds be used to award grants or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations to carry out eligible activities.

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00:10:44.730 --> 00:10:48.579

Angela Thi Bennett: Similarly, Under the Competitive Grant Program.

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00:10:48.780 --> 00:10:57.459

Angela Thi Bennett: The statute establishes a 5% set-aside for grants or agreements with these same Tribal and Native Entities.

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00:10:58.070 --> 00:11:13.840

Angela Thi Bennett: Together, these set-asides ensure that Native communities have direct access to funding to advance broadband adoption, digital skills development, and access to devices and public connectivity resources.

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00:11:17.730 --> 00:11:19.940

Angela Thi Bennett: Now, let's review eligibility.

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00:11:20.140 --> 00:11:31.680

Angela Thi Bennett: NTIA uses the term Native Entities to collectively refer to Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

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00:11:32.030 --> 00:11:41.110

Angela Thi Bennett: Eligibility is determined using established federal and state sources to ensure consistency and transparency.

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00:11:41.530 --> 00:11:47.110

Angela Thi Bennett: These sources include the Bureau of Indian Affairs' list of federally recognized Tribes.

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00:11:47.120 --> 00:12:05.450

Angela Thi Bennett: Alaska's Index of Regional Native Corporations, and several lists maintained by the Department of the Interior related to Native Hawaiian organizations, including Homestead and Beneficiary associations, and the Department of Hawaiian Homelands.

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00:12:06.050 --> 00:12:17.520

Angela Thi Bennett: Relying on these official sources helps provide clarity for applicants and ensures eligibility determinations are grounded in recognized authorities.

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00:12:21.690 --> 00:12:27.490

Angela Thi Bennett: Let's move on to eligible uses of funds under the Native Entities Grant Program.

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00:12:28.040 --> 00:12:42.799

Angela Thi Bennett: Under the Competitive Grant Program, the statute allows funds to be used for a broad range of broadband use and adoption activities. These include supporting broadband adoption tied to education and employment.

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00:12:42.800 --> 00:12:48.170

Angela Thi Bennett: Implementing training programs that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills.

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00:12:48.210 --> 00:12:51.400

Angela Thi Bennett: Or delivering workforce development programs.

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00:12:51.590 --> 00:13:10.880

Angela Thi Bennett: Funds may also be used to provide low- or no-cost equipment, software, and networking technology to support public access computing centers through community anchor institutions, and to carry out other activities the Assistant Secretary determines are consistent with the program's purpose.

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00:13:12.290 --> 00:13:20.750

Angela Thi Bennett: Under the Capacity Grant Program, eligible uses focus on supporting a state's digital equity plan.

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00:13:20.870 --> 00:13:38.180

Angela Thi Bennett: This includes assisting with plan implementation, advancing identified digital inclusion activities, and reporting back to the state on progress. Across both programs, permitted activities are those that promote economic stability.

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00:13:38.180 --> 00:13:47.489

Angela Thi Bennett: Access to education and healthcare, social and civic engagement, and community access to essential digital services.

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00:13:50.880 --> 00:14:04.120

Angela Thi Bennett: As we move into open dialogue, we welcome Tribal governments to share their experiences, insights, and recommendations in ways that can meaningfully influence how these programs move forward.

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00:14:04.310 --> 00:14:09.049

Angela Thi Bennett: And now I will pass it to Margaret to begin the dialogue. Thank you.

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00:14:10.360 --> 00:14:23.920

Margaret Gutierrez: Before reviewing the topics for today, we'd like to go over some housekeeping items. We've opened this session as listen-only mode to cut down on background noise. In this session, we will ask elected Tribal leaders or their designees to use the raise your hand function to have the opportunity to speak.

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00:14:24.160 --> 00:14:29.680

Margaret Gutierrez: I, or a member of my team, will unmute you when it is your turn, so that you can ask your questions during the session.

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00:14:29.820 --> 00:14:40.080

Margaret Gutierrez: There will also be time for Tribal leaders who are on audio only to be able to participate in the discussion. During that discussion, we will have to unmute all lines, and individuals will need to press star 6.

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00:14:40.200 --> 00:14:59.130

Margaret Gutierrez: Lastly, NTIA is also accepting and very much encouraging written comments. Written comments can be submitted to broadbandusa@ntia.gov, with the subject line "Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant Program Native Entities Grant Program" by February 13, 2026, at 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

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00:14:59.440 --> 00:15:05.419

Margaret Gutierrez: These instructions are also listed at the end of this PowerPoint deck, which will be available for download on the BroadbandUSA website.

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00:15:06.120 --> 00:15:14.760

Margaret Gutierrez: We look forward to your comments on the TBCP and Native Entities Grant Program to continue learning how we can work together to solve broadband access challenges in Indian Country.

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00:15:15.140 --> 00:15:29.100

Margaret Gutierrez: Additionally, please note that this is not an open meeting. Tribal consultations are off-record and not for press purposes. We ask that any press who are on the line please disconnect now to ensure Tribal leaders and stakeholders have the opportunity to participate.

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00:15:29.450 --> 00:15:42.269

Margaret Gutierrez: Now let's review the topics for today's consultation. The topics on this slide are intended to serve as guiding themes for our consultation today. These topics are intended to organize feedback and ensure we are hearing from Tribal leaders on the areas that matter most.

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00:15:43.030 --> 00:15:53.320

Margaret Gutierrez: First, we'll touch on program design and reform, including what is working well within the TBCP and Native Entities Grant Programs, and where adjustments could better support Tribal priorities and sovereignty.

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00:15:53.510 --> 00:16:03.160

Margaret Gutierrez: We'll also discuss alignment with BEAD, particularly how these programs can be complementary, coordinated, and non-duplicative, while continuing to address the unique needs of Tribal communities.

84

00:16:03.340 --> 00:16:14.400

Margaret Gutierrez: Another key focus is maximizing impact and use of funds. Our resources can be structured and deployed in ways that stretch dollars further and deliver meaningful, long-term connectivity outcomes on Tribal lands.

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00:16:14.510 --> 00:16:25.509

Margaret Gutierrez: We want to hear candid feedback on administrative burden, including challenges related to application, reporting, compliance, and overall program administration, and where processes could be streamlined or improved.

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00:16:26.240 --> 00:16:37.249

Margaret Gutierrez: We'll also invite discussion around technology advancements, including how emerging and evolving technologies, such as fixed wireless and low Earth orbit satellite, are impacting connectivity options in Indian Country.

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00:16:37.450 --> 00:16:48.079

Margaret Gutierrez: Relatedly, we'll explore broadband adoption challenges, recognizing that access alone does not always translate to adoption, and that affordability, digital skills, and community-specific barriers play an important role.

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00:16:48.320 --> 00:16:57.849

Margaret Gutierrez: We're also interested in learning about effective models and best practices, whether public, private, or public-private, that Tribes have found successful in advancing broadband access and adoption.

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00:16:58.120 --> 00:17:08.489

Margaret Gutierrez: Finally, we will leave space for additional feedback. If there are perspectives, experiences, or recommendations that do not fit neatly into these categories, we want to ensure there is room for those voices to be heard.

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00:17:08.730 --> 00:17:14.839

Margaret Gutierrez: We appreciate your willingness to engage in this dialogue and look forward to learning from your insights to help inform future program improvements.

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00:17:15.000 --> 00:17:22.119

Margaret Gutierrez: For record keeping, when providing feedback and responses, please provide your name, your title, and the Tribal government you are representing.

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00:17:40.650 --> 00:17:42.579

Margaret Gutierrez: We'll begin by walking through a set of flow

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00:17:44.590 --> 00:17:50.319

Margaret Gutierrez: We'll begin by walking through a set of program design and reform topics that will help frame today's government-to-government dialogue.

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00:17:50.560 --> 00:18:02.650

Margaret Gutierrez: Since the initial TBCP1 NOFO was issued in 2021, followed by the second TBCP NOFO in 2023, and the Native Entity NOFOs in 2024, the broadband landscape has evolved significantly.

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00:18:03.120 --> 00:18:11.730

Margaret Gutierrez: Deployment has progressed in many areas, technologies have advanced, and additional federal and state funding sources, such as the BEAD program, are now underway.

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00:18:11.900 --> 00:18:21.749

Margaret Gutierrez: In light of these developments, NTIA has taken a step back to assess how remaining unobligated TBCP and Native Entities funds can be used in the most effective and appropriate way moving forward.

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00:18:22.050 --> 00:18:36.730

Margaret Gutierrez: As part of that effort, NTIA is seeking direct input from Tribal leaders on how these programs can be refined or potentially redesigned to better reflect current conditions and more effectively meet the unique connectivity needs, priorities, and circumstances of Tribal communities.

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00:18:36.820 --> 00:18:49.119

Margaret Gutierrez: This includes considering whether elements such as program structure, eligible activities, funding approaches, or implementation timelines could be adjusted to better support Tribal sovereignty, local decision-making, and long-term sustainability.

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00:18:49.360 --> 00:18:58.289

Margaret Gutierrez: To help guide today's consultation, we will present a set of discussion topics and questions. These are intended to frame the conversation and provide context for the dialogue that will follow.

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00:18:58.860 --> 00:19:13.870

Margaret Gutierrez: As we address each theme, we will open the floor for an open discussion where we invite Tribal leaders to share perspectives, recommendations, and lessons learned, both from what has worked well and from challenges encountered. Your feedback will help inform NTIA's consideration of potential future program improvements.

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00:19:13.970 --> 00:19:22.840

Margaret Gutierrez: For the first discussion question, how can NTIA reform its TBCP and Native Entities Grant Programs to better serve Tribal connectivity?

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00:19:26.710 --> 00:19:29.130
Margaret Gutierrez: And with that, we will open the floor.

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00:19:36.590 --> 00:19:45.250
Maci Morin: Alright, the first person I see is Will Micklin. Will, you have been unmuted. Feel free to unmute and introduce yourself.

104
00:19:50.910 --> 00:19:52.630
Will Micklin: Hello?

105
00:19:53.120 --> 00:19:54.310
Will Micklin: Can you hear me now?

106
00:19:54.700 --> 00:19:55.470
Margaret Gutierrez: Hi, Kim.

107
00:19:57.390 --> 00:19:58.370
Will Micklin: Oh, jeez.

108
00:20:04.800 --> 00:20:11.400
Will Micklin: Second name is Yaan Yaan Eesh, my English name is Will Micklin, I'm Vice President of the Executive Council.

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00:20:11.770 --> 00:20:15.269
Will Micklin: the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

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00:20:15.640 --> 00:20:23.000
Will Micklin: We are the regional, federally recognized Indian Tribe of Southeast Alaska. Richard J. Peterson is our president.

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00:20:23.410 --> 00:20:32.440
Will Micklin: We represent over 38,000 Tribal citizens in our Aboriginal territory of Southeast Alaska. That's all of

112
00:20:32.610 --> 00:20:36.140
Will Micklin: Alaska, east of the 141st Meridian.

113
00:20:36.620 --> 00:20:41.039
Will Micklin: It's the approximate size of the state of Indiana or the country of Portugal.

114
00:20:41.380 --> 00:20:45.359
Will Micklin: Tlingit Haida implements a TBCP Round 1 award.

115
00:20:46.250 --> 00:20:54.680

Will Micklin: Excuse me, through its Title Network Division to serve our substantial number of unserved communities with

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00:20:55.010 --> 00:21:04.520

Will Micklin: broadband services, and we appreciate this opportunity to provide insights on restructuring the TBCP and NE programs.

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00:21:05.020 --> 00:21:08.950

Will Micklin: As to reforming TBCP and advancing technology.

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00:21:09.200 --> 00:21:14.210

Will Micklin: To truly serve Tribal connectivity, NTIA

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00:21:14.330 --> 00:21:22.230

Will Micklin: Should prioritize sustainability and flexibility in remote, rugged archipelago terrains.

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00:21:22.330 --> 00:21:34.339

Will Micklin: Like Southeast Alaska, with short building seasons, high cost of build-out for undersea transmission fiber, and high cost of middle-mile and last-mile distribution.

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00:21:35.280 --> 00:21:42.170

Will Micklin: Fiber-only mandates are unrealistic. If the cost is borne by Tlingit and Haida alone.

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00:21:42.860 --> 00:21:46.009

Will Micklin: Under the lowest cost terms of the program.

123

00:21:46.130 --> 00:21:58.810

Will Micklin: Even though core transmission, core network transmission via undersea fiber and fiber between fixed wireless towers are components of the most effective solution to

124

00:21:59.030 --> 00:22:03.629

Will Micklin: Provision advanced broadband services at performance levels

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00:22:03.850 --> 00:22:07.720

Will Micklin: Contemplated, if not mandated, by the program.

126

00:22:07.950 --> 00:22:16.679

Will Micklin: Recent advancements in low Earth orbit satellite and fixed wireless have been game changers for us in Southeast Alaska.

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00:22:16.830 --> 00:22:32.990

Will Micklin: Providing immediate high-speed connectivity, where fiber is geotechnically or financially impossible, although the performance legs, the outcomes

128
00:22:34.520 --> 00:22:50.669
Will Micklin: contemplated by the program. NTIA should explicitly support hybrid network designs that utilize fiber for core infrastructure interconnections and wireless solutions for remote homes.

129
00:22:51.540 --> 00:23:00.700
Will Micklin: My only other comment on this section It's just a appeal for

130
00:23:01.020 --> 00:23:05.149
Will Micklin: Relieving the cap on the administrative costs at 2%.

131
00:23:05.480 --> 00:23:16.090
Will Micklin: We have the ability to sustain our title network division with a bare 2% admin burden while

132
00:23:16.420 --> 00:23:30.470
Will Micklin: Delivering on Equitable distribution for unserved locations who are in the, potentially in the lowest economic

133
00:23:31.760 --> 00:23:41.850
Will Micklin: Category puts an enormous strain on the organization to support the deliverables with adequate staff.

134
00:23:42.690 --> 00:23:45.969
Will Micklin: Gunalchéesh, thank you, and I look forward to

135
00:23:46.880 --> 00:23:50.019
Will Micklin: Additional comments without my introduction. Thank you.

136
00:23:51.750 --> 00:24:07.820
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you so much for your comments. I have a clarifying question. How would you suggest that we evaluate sustainability? I think that we're always thoughtful in the burden that we're putting back on the Tribal communities, and so I would love your input on how we could evaluate sustainability.

137
00:24:09.930 --> 00:24:17.690
Will Micklin: Well, that's, I appreciate the question, because in my view, it's a facts and circumstances.

138
00:24:17.840 --> 00:24:23.870
Will Micklin: Scenario, where it depends on the factors on the ground.

139
00:24:24.140 --> 00:24:33.329
Will Micklin: In our instance, we have high costs for deployment of infrastructure and facilities. We have a

140
00:24:33.830 --> 00:24:39.430

Will Micklin: Low commitment from, the legacy carriers.

141

00:24:39.790 --> 00:24:42.379

Will Micklin: But the highest commitment from

142

00:24:42.550 --> 00:24:51.990

Will Micklin: Tlingit and Haida through the program to deliver the lowest possible cost and yet

143

00:24:52.100 --> 00:24:56.500

Will Micklin: With the very high-cost Not just of

144

00:24:56.770 --> 00:25:04.299

Will Micklin: Equipment and supplies, but transportation, transporting, and then installing and supporting

145

00:25:04.630 --> 00:25:08.810

Will Micklin: So, sustainability, to me, means that there's

146

00:25:08.910 --> 00:25:14.689

Will Micklin: A sufficient support to put the facilities

147

00:25:15.550 --> 00:25:22.530

Will Micklin: In service with the provisioned services at the performance levels required.

148

00:25:22.920 --> 00:25:27.299

Will Micklin: That can still be sustained by the customer.

149

00:25:27.540 --> 00:25:31.729

Will Micklin: We are always sensitive to the customer. Many

150

00:25:32.110 --> 00:25:35.499

Will Micklin: Can be, not have, be unserved.

151

00:25:35.670 --> 00:25:44.270

Will Micklin: Some because they haven't had, facilities, services available, but also because of the cost.

152

00:25:44.900 --> 00:25:46.600

Will Micklin: And, that,

153

00:25:47.200 --> 00:26:02.760

Will Micklin: Maintaining a cost that is acceptable at performance levels that can be tailored to that deliverable, where we get basic services, and then tier up for more advanced services, where we can recapture

154
00:26:02.980 --> 00:26:13.330
Will Micklin: Revenues from providing a higher cost or higher performance services to those with the ability to pay is a,

155
00:26:13.600 --> 00:26:24.170
Will Micklin: It's a more sophisticated model, but it is one that, that we think is necessary in order to

156
00:26:24.790 --> 00:26:27.650
Will Micklin: Fully address the sustainability question.

157
00:26:28.080 --> 00:26:29.990
Will Micklin: So, I thank you for that question.

158
00:26:32.940 --> 00:26:36.410
Margaret Gutierrez: Does anyone else from the team have clarifying questions?

159
00:26:44.230 --> 00:26:46.340
Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, Maci, back to you.

160
00:26:48.940 --> 00:26:57.950
Maci Morin: Thank you. Next, we have Ernie Rasmussen. I apologize for not saying your last name correctly. You are unmuted, ready to talk when you are.

161
00:27:00.520 --> 00:27:05.649
Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you, this is Ernie Rasmussen. I am the Executive Director of

162
00:27:06.290 --> 00:27:10.009
Ernie Rasmussen: of, Bigfoot Communications of the Colville Tribes.

163
00:27:10.140 --> 00:27:14.340
Ernie Rasmussen: We are the Tribally formed.

164
00:27:14.560 --> 00:27:19.600
Ernie Rasmussen: internet service provider for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

165
00:27:21.450 --> 00:27:28.909
Ernie Rasmussen: Appreciate the opportunity to offer comment and look forward to continuing to work with you all as we work through this.

166
00:27:30.980 --> 00:27:39.869
Ernie Rasmussen: When we think about program design and reform, you know, again, in, you know, full disclosure, again, we were a Tribal Broadband Connectivity Round 1 recipient.

167

00:27:40.720 --> 00:27:48.900

Ernie Rasmussen: And we still have a number of outstanding connectivity needs because of the extent, the large footprint.

168

00:27:49.100 --> 00:27:53.859

Ernie Rasmussen: Of the Colville Reservation, it's approximately 2,200 square miles.

169

00:27:53.960 --> 00:27:57.509

Ernie Rasmussen: We refer to it as,

170

00:27:58.500 --> 00:28:01.270

Ernie Rasmussen: Roughly the equivalent to the size of the state of Delaware.

171

00:28:02.440 --> 00:28:05.289

Ernie Rasmussen: With population, you know, spread throughout

172

00:28:05.440 --> 00:28:11.170

Ernie Rasmussen: East to west, north to south. 4 river valleys and 3 mountain passes.

173

00:28:11.310 --> 00:28:15.589

Ernie Rasmussen: That we are working to deploy a network

174

00:28:16.080 --> 00:28:21.990

Ernie Rasmussen: Within our first round of connectivity funding.

175

00:28:22.720 --> 00:28:28.929

Ernie Rasmussen: It was recommended to us that we scaled back on our request,

176

00:28:29.940 --> 00:28:33.949

Ernie Rasmussen: that we did not put in a full

177

00:28:34.640 --> 00:28:38.230

Ernie Rasmussen: proposal that would fully serve the Colville Reservation.

178

00:28:38.610 --> 00:28:43.359

Ernie Rasmussen: So, we had to, we had to pull some locations back, thinking

179

00:28:43.640 --> 00:28:46.150

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, number one, it would

180

00:28:46.540 --> 00:28:56.859

Ernie Rasmussen: leave more funding for others, other Tribes, and number two, there would be more funding coming down the pipeline, in the form of BEAD and other programs.

181

00:28:58.850 --> 00:29:07.249

Ernie Rasmussen: So, we have since found out that BEAD was not awarded to us, and so we have a number of outstanding broadband locations that have not been funded.

182

00:29:07.440 --> 00:29:12.009

Ernie Rasmussen: That we intentionally removed from our first round of Tribal broadband connectivity.

183

00:29:12.810 --> 00:29:16.149

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, we would ask that, again, in this program design.

184

00:29:16.270 --> 00:29:23.559

Ernie Rasmussen: In this round of travel broadband connectivity is that you would prioritize those be denied

185

00:29:24.290 --> 00:29:25.609

Ernie Rasmussen: project areas.

186

00:29:25.710 --> 00:29:29.419

Ernie Rasmussen: Especially those with high-density and low-income households.

187

00:29:29.910 --> 00:29:31.799

Ernie Rasmussen: We did

188

00:29:32.780 --> 00:29:39.339

Ernie Rasmussen: present under the BEAD design, the BEAD proposal, a design for fiber.

189

00:29:41.000 --> 00:29:49.259

Ernie Rasmussen: Knowing that the LEO solution was not an impactful solution for this Tribal community.

190

00:29:50.950 --> 00:30:03.200

Ernie Rasmussen: There's a number of impacts that, that are maximized under a fiber deployment, as opposed to a LEO, at least in our Tribal, situation.

191

00:30:04.510 --> 00:30:13.180

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, we would, we would also ask that the Travel Broadband Connectivity Program

192

00:30:13.330 --> 00:30:19.859

Ernie Rasmussen: Is staffed to a level that can allow for it to effectively and efficiently

193

00:30:21.000 --> 00:30:24.989

Ernie Rasmussen: Deploy the funding to the communities it's designed to serve.

194

00:30:25.400 --> 00:30:32.590

Ernie Rasmussen: We know that there's been some bottlenecks in the past, and there's been some fear of

195

00:30:33.220 --> 00:30:37.280

Ernie Rasmussen: The loss of staffing at the federal level, and, you know, that

196

00:30:37.390 --> 00:30:41.029

Ernie Rasmussen: puts Tribes in a position of uncertainty.

197

00:30:41.390 --> 00:30:46.170

Ernie Rasmussen: Of where their projects are, where

198

00:30:46.340 --> 00:30:50.539

Ernie Rasmussen: Their ability to actually effectively deploy the project in a timely manner.

199

00:30:51.440 --> 00:30:56.119

Ernie Rasmussen: The costs increases due to inflation.

200

00:30:56.540 --> 00:31:00.360

Ernie Rasmussen: So, we would ask that, again, that the federal government considers

201

00:31:00.520 --> 00:31:05.259

Ernie Rasmussen: adequate staffing for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.

202

00:31:06.070 --> 00:31:13.800

Ernie Rasmussen: We would also ask that the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program becomes a primary

203

00:31:14.180 --> 00:31:23.319

Ernie Rasmussen: Tribal broadband deployment program, not a residual of BEAD supplements. It does not, we would ask that it does not become a BEAD cut and paste

204

00:31:23.460 --> 00:31:34.360

Ernie Rasmussen: In this round, and that should Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program continue, That, there are,

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00:31:34.760 --> 00:31:36.829

Ernie Rasmussen: we would hope to see

206

00:31:37.050 --> 00:31:39.200

Ernie Rasmussen: it to be an annual program

207

00:31:39.590 --> 00:31:46.370

Ernie Rasmussen: that is available for Tribes, similar to what we saw with USDA and ReConnect,

208
00:31:46.530 --> 00:31:47.830
Ernie Rasmussen: Year over year.

209
00:31:48.000 --> 00:31:53.579
Ernie Rasmussen: You know, to draw an equivalent to USDA, we saw USDA staff

210
00:31:53.800 --> 00:32:02.899
Ernie Rasmussen: Repeatedly in Tribal spaces, whether that was at conferences, you know, site visits, and

211
00:32:03.470 --> 00:32:06.960
Ernie Rasmussen: Really pushing out, again, their broadband programs.

212
00:32:07.540 --> 00:32:10.160
Ernie Rasmussen: We would love to see the NTIA fund

213
00:32:10.310 --> 00:32:16.210
Ernie Rasmussen: the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, so that they can have that presence in those spaces where Tribes are.

214
00:32:16.320 --> 00:32:27.409
Ernie Rasmussen: To be able to give them the ability to develop the relationships, to continue to work with those Tribes, so that they can be most aware of the challenges.

215
00:32:27.720 --> 00:32:34.420
Ernie Rasmussen: The last piece that I want to present on this topic would be that,

216
00:32:35.420 --> 00:32:45.919
Ernie Rasmussen: we are having a lot of difficulty in bringing on a partner, an operations partner, due to some of the rules under the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program,

217
00:32:46.670 --> 00:32:54.499
Ernie Rasmussen: There's a lot of confusion around revenue sharing, a lot under the program, the 10-year program period.

218
00:32:54.980 --> 00:33:00.760
Ernie Rasmussen: and how to be able to bring on those

219
00:33:01.100 --> 00:33:04.370
Ernie Rasmussen: Those network operators that have experience.

220
00:33:04.550 --> 00:33:07.840
Ernie Rasmussen: Especially in greenfield areas like the Colville Tribes

221
00:33:08.110 --> 00:33:17.019

Ernie Rasmussen: that can help guide and assure that we are going to meet a level of service that can maximize our revenue potentials

222
00:33:17.290 --> 00:33:27.860
Ernie Rasmussen: In being able to bring on enterprise customers that require a level of service that we would be concerned about being able to meet.

223
00:33:28.040 --> 00:33:33.899
Ernie Rasmussen: Without that, partnership and expertise that we can contract with.

224
00:33:34.170 --> 00:33:42.230
Ernie Rasmussen: So cleaning up some of the uncertainty and the rules around bringing on partners for revenue sharing.

225
00:33:42.360 --> 00:33:54.170
Ernie Rasmussen: And, you know, in terms of operations, it would be another, thing that we would ask under this program design and reform. And with that, I will finish up my comment. Thank you.

226
00:33:55.170 --> 00:34:02.929
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you so much, Ernie. Can you clarify why you were removed from, the BEAD funding process?

227
00:34:04.060 --> 00:34:09.249
Ernie Rasmussen: We did not give consent for LEO. We actually, we said no consent for LEO.

228
00:34:09.389 --> 00:34:13.850
Ernie Rasmussen: But the fiber design that we presented was

229
00:34:14.030 --> 00:34:17.610
Ernie Rasmussen: Exceeded the high-cost threshold

230
00:34:17.710 --> 00:34:35.089
Ernie Rasmussen: that BEAD had imposed of \$12,500. Our program design, because again, of course, we're very rural, very remote, like much of Indian Country, our fiber design was in excess of the \$12,500 threshold, and they

231
00:34:35.409 --> 00:34:39.630
Ernie Rasmussen: asked us to consider a LEO solution, and

232
00:34:40.010 --> 00:34:41.630
Ernie Rasmussen: We did not consent to that.

233
00:34:42.130 --> 00:34:48.849
Margaret Gutierrez: Can you expand on why LEO is not appropriate or doesn't work in your area?

234
00:34:50.100 --> 00:34:57.380
Ernie Rasmussen: When we consider the impact, and I know this was a topic further down.

235
00:34:57.570 --> 00:35:08.519
Ernie Rasmussen: But, you know, the impact of fiber and even wireless designs, so for example, the couple Tribes were awarded a 2.5

236
00:35:08.730 --> 00:35:21.360
Ernie Rasmussen: license, you know, for Spectrum, and so wireless deployment. The couple Tribes now has certified tower climbers, wireless network, administrators. This, this, that

237
00:35:22.290 --> 00:35:26.350
Ernie Rasmussen: Infrastructure, that technology has resulted in job creation.

238
00:35:26.650 --> 00:35:35.389
Ernie Rasmussen: And similarly, so with fiber deployments. We know and expect that there will be

239
00:35:35.980 --> 00:35:46.460
Ernie Rasmussen: jobs that will be created in this space around fiber deployments, terrestrial deployments. It could be a hybrid wireless fiber deployment.

240
00:35:47.140 --> 00:35:52.780
Ernie Rasmussen: it does not, LEO does not have that type of an impact where jobs are sorely needed.

241
00:35:52.870 --> 00:36:11.080
Ernie Rasmussen: And there's no there's no multiplier even off from that. It is a product that is dropped into your community, and yes, it provides a service, but it is very simple in its in its deployment, and it just simply doesn't offer that type of an impact, where, again, job creation

242
00:36:11.220 --> 00:36:19.790
Ernie Rasmussen: And economic multiplier results in, in a whole nother sector

243
00:36:19.900 --> 00:36:23.959
Ernie Rasmussen: Within the Tribal economy being propped up.

244
00:36:26.820 --> 00:36:30.830
Margaret Gutierrez: Okay, thank you for letting me ask you a bunch of questions. Anyone else have questions?

245
00:36:34.570 --> 00:36:36.550
Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, back to you, Maci.

272

00:40:55.540 --> 00:41:10.349

Maci Morin: Great, thank you. I did, the next hand I saw go up was Kristina Andrew, but I don't see your hand up anymore, so Kristina, if you'd like to speak, please raise your hand back up. There you are, perfect. I am opening up your mic.

273

00:41:11.730 --> 00:41:15.650

Kristina Andrew: Hi, my name is Kristina Andrew, and I'm calling in from

274

00:41:15.840 --> 00:41:20.000

Kristina Andrew: Curyung Tribal Council, but I'm here representing

275

00:41:20.250 --> 00:41:30.120

Kristina Andrew: Igiugig Village Council, and 16 other Tribal or 15 other Tribes that are part of the SALMONet Consortium that currently have a TBCP Round 1 award.

276

00:41:30.280 --> 00:41:35.440

Kristina Andrew: One thing I do want to point out, the gentleman that was speaking before the last commenter.

277

00:41:36.000 --> 00:41:40.079

Kristina Andrew: Was that, over the lifetime of

278

00:41:40.260 --> 00:41:45.550

Kristina Andrew: the infrastructure, and I put it in the comments here, too, is that LEO has a longer,

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00:41:45.720 --> 00:41:50.929

Kristina Andrew: LEO satellite provider has a longer-term cost over

280

00:41:51.390 --> 00:42:01.420

Kristina Andrew: For Tribes over a 40-year period versus fiber. And so, fiber in communities where it's hard to get resources, fiber has a longer-term impact

281

00:42:01.860 --> 00:42:09.100

Kristina Andrew: For the communities, and it in our communities, we already have a middle mile to the community,

282

00:42:09.340 --> 00:42:25.709

Kristina Andrew: and having fiber connect to that middle mile to the home is really what we're missing in a lot of those communities, to be able to implement broadband that is a lower cost, and I do want to reiterate the fact that it will create more local jobs.

283

00:42:25.840 --> 00:42:29.060

Kristina Andrew: And have more local participation

284

00:42:29.380 --> 00:42:48.380

Kristina Andrew: than LEO providers, and it's something, when you have that fiber connection, you get a lot better customer service for the end user, versus LEO, you are talking to, a robot or AI a lot of the times, and for some of the communities where they have not had access

285

00:42:48.570 --> 00:42:53.349

Kristina Andrew: to internet until recently.

286

00:42:54.660 --> 00:43:07.920

Kristina Andrew: Not having that person that they can have a two-way conversation with is really difficult for them to comprehend. The digital skills are not there to just be able to rely on AI technology and know-how to prompt it in a way that's meaningful.

287

00:43:08.400 --> 00:43:16.509

Kristina Andrew: And so, I really feel like fiber is the best solution for our communities. Not only that, but our communities in rural Alaska. We face

288

00:43:16.740 --> 00:43:18.870

Kristina Andrew: tremendous

289

00:43:20.420 --> 00:43:28.120

Kristina Andrew: weather issues, and LEO does not hold up to the weather issues. Some of our communities have small power grids.

290

00:43:28.150 --> 00:43:41.650

Kristina Andrew: And the LEOs, some folks already have LEO dishes, and when the smaller power grids have fluctuations in the amount of power that it's producing, the LEO satellite dishes actually crash.

291

00:43:41.650 --> 00:43:50.060

Kristina Andrew: And, they are unable to perform anymore. You have to get a new device, because they, the power surges blow

292

00:43:50.270 --> 00:43:53.509

Kristina Andrew: The electrical components in the satellite dish.

293

00:43:54.220 --> 00:44:02.730

Kristina Andrew: And, every 5 cycles of having something like that happen, it completely wipes the dish

294

00:44:02.860 --> 00:44:23.310

Kristina Andrew: to be, so that it's not functional anymore, and you have to go in and reset it. Which means you need more technical assistance, so it's really not a very sustainable option in remote rural Alaska to have LEO Satellite be a provider with we're facing extreme cold temperatures right now, and we're having a lot of issues with the LEO Satellite dishes that are currently in our region.

295

00:44:23.470 --> 00:44:33.760

Kristina Andrew: And so, I really, we are not having issues with the fiber that is already laid in the in the region. We are having issues with the LEO dish, where right now, we're at sub

296
00:44:34.320 --> 00:44:41.790
Kristina Andrew: My temperature reading on my computer is saying negative 6. Over the last 2 days, I've recorded sub, 30

297
00:44:42.140 --> 00:44:48.470
Kristina Andrew: Below, and it is causing a lot of issues to the LEO hardware.

298
00:44:48.620 --> 00:44:56.249
Kristina Andrew: Versus fiber, so it is not sustainable in Alaska, especially when you have extremely cold temperatures.

299
00:45:00.740 --> 00:45:19.929
Kristina Andrew: So, I think I'll make sure to, like, preface that we prefer fiber in rural Alaska, especially, and anywhere that there is cold temperatures where it gets sub-zero, I don't think it's a sustainable option to have LEO. You're gonna have to reinvest in the infrastructure, and what then for the Tribes that don't have

300
00:45:20.100 --> 00:45:22.210
Kristina Andrew: another funding opportunity

301
00:45:22.650 --> 00:45:30.629
Kristina Andrew: to be able to turn to for that infrastructure, so when fiber lasts at least 40 years. So, anyways, that's my comment.

302
00:45:31.000 --> 00:45:35.420
Kristina Andrew: I'm pretty disappointed that we're looking at LEO at this point.

303
00:45:36.110 --> 00:45:50.070
Kristina Andrew: And I would reiterate the comment on the 2% administrative cap. These Tribes are severely tapped capacity-wise, and to have somebody there that could in the community that could help administer these awards, it would make a mountain of difference and make things

304
00:45:50.360 --> 00:45:55.930
Kristina Andrew: A lot more smooth for the communities, instead of putting that administrative burden on them.

305
00:45:56.270 --> 00:46:01.479
Kristina Andrew: When they already have they're administering so many other programs as a Tribal government. Thank you.

306
00:46:05.590 --> 00:46:15.090
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you so much for your comments. I really appreciate the detail on your temperatures and the impact on LEO as well. That's super helpful for us. Any other clarifying questions?

307
00:46:19.830 --> 00:46:21.420
Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, Maci, back to you.

308
00:46:22.320 --> 00:46:28.599
Maci Morin: Thank you. Okay, next up, I see Robert. Robert, you are able to talk now.

309
00:46:39.810 --> 00:46:43.689
Robert Griffin: Halito, Rob Griffin with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

310
00:46:44.010 --> 00:46:51.439
Robert Griffin: Broadband Director. So, just a couple of comments here on some of the previous speakers.

311
00:46:51.870 --> 00:46:59.130
Robert Griffin: I think, you know, what is being said about LEO is a very valid point, and

312
00:46:59.450 --> 00:47:05.470
Robert Griffin: When you think about the ability to provide sustainable internet over the next

313
00:47:05.900 --> 00:47:14.080
Robert Griffin: 10, 20, 30 years, I think it really comes back to, how you budget these.

314
00:47:14.430 --> 00:47:22.299
Robert Griffin: So, you know, today, everything's looked at in, for the most part, based on cost per passing.

315
00:47:22.570 --> 00:47:27.820
Robert Griffin: And if you're in a location that doesn't have fiber built to the area

316
00:47:27.940 --> 00:47:42.010
Robert Griffin: then that'll raise your overall cost per passing rate. So, I'd like to see some type of separate categorization for middle-mile infrastructure, where you can place a, you know, real

317
00:47:42.170 --> 00:47:57.739
Robert Griffin: Cost per passing, dollar-wise, for the home, which is probably going to be pretty standard across the board, and be able to subsidize within the application the middle-mile access route, and

318
00:47:57.880 --> 00:48:09.640
Robert Griffin: I think that when you do that, it'll change the financials of that, because, you know, there's a couple of things. I know we're gonna talk about BEAD in a little bit, but on the TBCP,

319
00:48:10.200 --> 00:48:19.019
Robert Griffin: You know, there were so many crossovers and overlaps with different carriers within the reservation for us, and

320
00:48:19.130 --> 00:48:22.480
Robert Griffin: You know, we were able to work through that by

321
00:48:22.590 --> 00:48:27.809
Robert Griffin: Providing a checkerboard response for different homes in different areas.

322
00:48:28.020 --> 00:48:35.830
Robert Griffin: And fortunately for us, we were able to design it in such a way that we could absorb the cost of the middle mile into the project.

323
00:48:35.980 --> 00:48:52.669
Robert Griffin: But I think, going forward, if we're able to create that categorization in the budget for just middle mile, it will show a lower cost for passing, and it will become more substantially aware of the actual cost of the middle mile.

324
00:48:52.940 --> 00:49:08.280
Robert Griffin: And further down that path, I think that being able to have the option to build the route, and not always the least cost route, because in some cases, you might have a smaller provider

325
00:49:08.360 --> 00:49:14.890
Robert Griffin: that is not necessarily a long-term provider, or is a much smaller provider of services

326
00:49:14.890 --> 00:49:36.950
Robert Griffin: build a fiber route, and I'll say quote-unquote fiber route, that is not made from a carrier perspective. And so I think a Tribal nation should have the option to be able to work and build in a carrier-grade fiber route into the area, and it doesn't necessarily have to be along the same route that another

327
00:49:36.950 --> 00:49:40.820
Robert Griffin: you know, in this case, a smaller carrier might have access into.

328
00:49:40.910 --> 00:49:54.450
Robert Griffin: And, you know, that might show a little bit of difference in cost, but when you think about the long-term sustainability of providing that, that will make a huge difference down the road.

329
00:49:54.700 --> 00:50:07.460
Robert Griffin: Now, for the LEO portion, I think that, I've heard a couple of seminars and webinars on the LEO perspective, and I've listened to how

330

00:50:07.900 --> 00:50:21.039

Robert Griffin: this is, given some use cases, and there has been representation of the type of bandwidth that is available. And I think, you know, what is not being

331

00:50:21.070 --> 00:50:35.580

Robert Griffin: understood in these presentations and is carried forward is that in any type of wireless connectivity, it's always dependent on what's feeding that main connection. And so,

332

00:50:35.710 --> 00:50:39.389

Robert Griffin: Anything over the course of time from a wireless perspective.

333

00:50:39.390 --> 00:50:56.829

Robert Griffin: And, you know, fiber operates in this capacity in the same way, but it has a much higher number of users that can be put onto the network. So, for instance, you know, if you just look at we'll use a tower, for instance. If you feed a tower with a 100-meg connection.

334

00:50:56.830 --> 00:51:01.540

Robert Griffin: You can only have so many users on that tower with good connectivity.

335

00:51:01.540 --> 00:51:20.499

Robert Griffin: And so, if you put a device in the air, and you have limited capacity for those connections, again, you can only put so many users at the end of those devices before the signal starts to, you know, desecrate the connection and not allow someone to actually use it.

336

00:51:20.500 --> 00:51:32.749

Robert Griffin: My biggest concern, and I see this on a technical side happen all the time, where you have expectations that a type of wireless connection is going to work long-term.

337

00:51:32.750 --> 00:51:51.019

Robert Griffin: And then you build connectivity to it, and then you start providing services in the area. And we all know that once you provide internet to a remote area that's unserved, you'll probably start to have more people want connectivity. And when you look at the growth of everything that's going on in rural communities.

338

00:51:51.020 --> 00:51:57.519

Robert Griffin: At some point, there will be a cap to the number of users that can connect into any type of wireless network.

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00:51:57.520 --> 00:52:15.709

Robert Griffin: And I haven't seen any type of white paper, other than some very last terms presentations on how that's going to be addressed. So, if we go wireless now as much as possible, just to get the cost per passing down.

340

00:52:15.710 --> 00:52:21.169

Robert Griffin: Then, in 3 or 5 years, or just whatever the timetable is gonna be,

341
00:52:21.340 --> 00:52:37.210
Robert Griffin: everybody's gonna be very disappointed in their connectivity. And, you know, my understanding of this program, as well as the BEAD program, that this is not a short-term fix, this is a long-term solution to providing connectivity. And so,

342
00:52:37.210 --> 00:52:42.299
Robert Griffin: You know, all we're doing today is just taking a dollar amount that is allocated for

343
00:52:42.300 --> 00:52:46.910
Robert Griffin: The program, and then we're working it backwards to get as many users as we can.

344
00:52:46.910 --> 00:53:10.730
Robert Griffin: And I think what we should be doing is, when we see an oversubscription and number of applications that come in, there's X number of dollars available, and then, you know, we're providing applications for 5X or 10X, or whatever the number is, there should be feedback to increase the total dollar amount to be able to find more applications that would fit to a higher dollar amount.

345
00:53:10.730 --> 00:53:27.939
Robert Griffin: Not the pushback of, okay, let's work to get a lower cost for passing, thus eliminating the use of the technology, or, you know, just eliminating the number of applications. And then when we start grading the applications and looking at it that way

346
00:53:27.940 --> 00:53:47.580
Robert Griffin: and you start to get discounted because you have a higher cost for passing, that's actually doing the exact same thing. So, I mean, I think if there's some more thought that can be put into the applications for all of these things, and, you know, when we get into the bead conversation, I think that that really needs to be relevant as well.

347
00:53:48.160 --> 00:53:50.209
Robert Griffin: That's my comments. Yakoke.

348
00:53:54.750 --> 00:53:57.869
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Rob. Anyone have any clarifying questions?

349
00:54:05.350 --> 00:54:06.929
Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, Maci, back to you.

350
00:54:07.330 --> 00:54:17.119
Maci Morin: All right, Johnna Flynn, you're going to be next, and Sharayah Laney will be after that. So, Johnna, your line is open.

351
00:54:19.610 --> 00:54:21.190
Johnna Flynn: Hi, can you hear me okay?

352
00:54:22.080 --> 00:54:22.840
Margaret Gutierrez: Hi, Ken.

353
00:54:23.950 --> 00:54:31.849
Johnna Flynn: My name is Johnna Flynn. I am the THPO for the Jena Band of Choctaw. I'm here per our Tribal Chief.

354
00:54:32.120 --> 00:54:39.749
Johnna Flynn: Just to kind of listen to what's going on. We're actually starting at the ground floor.

355
00:54:40.670 --> 00:54:49.089
Johnna Flynn: We're a small Tribe, there's only a little over 400 members in the Tribe. So we're trying to do what we can

356
00:54:49.320 --> 00:54:54.650
Johnna Flynn: With this opportunity to better serve the Tribal members.

357
00:54:55.480 --> 00:55:01.990
Johnna Flynn: We were not even aware that we had this great opportunity until a friend notified me.

358
00:55:02.260 --> 00:55:04.120
Johnna Flynn: Hey, did you know you have

359
00:55:04.610 --> 00:55:08.839
Johnna Flynn: 2.5 GHz of connectivity, or whatever.

360
00:55:09.660 --> 00:55:16.290
Johnna Flynn: And so, we're starting at the very bottom, this is an opportunity

361
00:55:16.580 --> 00:55:19.629
Johnna Flynn: That could be great things for such a small Tribe.

362
00:55:20.010 --> 00:55:23.889
Johnna Flynn: I guess my main thing is

363
00:55:24.150 --> 00:55:31.200
Johnna Flynn: Is there any way I can get more information concerning the grant that you have available?

364
00:55:31.520 --> 00:55:34.760
Johnna Flynn: A friend just called and notified me that, hey,

365
00:55:34.890 --> 00:55:39.480
Johnna Flynn: NTIA has a grant opportunity. You need to get in on this.

366
00:55:43.570 --> 00:55:50.479
Margaret Gutierrez: Absolutely. So, on our at the end of this, we'll share our website, which is broadbandusa.gov.

367
00:55:50.600 --> 00:56:00.800
Margaret Gutierrez: But we'll also, you can sign up for information, or you can send us an email, and we'll get you on the email list, and I'll have somebody from my team reach out to you.

368
00:56:01.140 --> 00:56:02.680
Johnna Flynn: Okay, I appreciate it. Thank you.

369
00:56:02.680 --> 00:56:03.460
Margaret Gutierrez: Absolutely.

370
00:56:07.740 --> 00:56:24.090
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Hi, Johnna. In addition to the resources that we, you know, will eventually provide, is there anything in particular, you know, as a smaller Tribe that you could share would be helpful, for you as you're coming up to speed with this?

371
00:56:30.580 --> 00:56:34.690
Johnna Flynn: Information is the main thing

372
00:56:35.530 --> 00:56:37.320
Johnna Flynn: like I said.

373
00:56:37.590 --> 00:56:44.440
Johnna Flynn: I've only been doing this job for a couple years now, and I wasn't even aware that this was something

374
00:56:44.750 --> 00:56:49.069
Johnna Flynn: an opportunity for the Tribe. The council,

375
00:56:49.620 --> 00:56:57.009
Johnna Flynn: A lot of them that were in at the time that this was done is no longer available, so we're kind of coming in blind.

376
00:56:58.680 --> 00:57:03.819
Johnna Flynn: Information, I think, Is the main thing.

377
00:57:07.380 --> 00:57:18.189
Margaret Gutierrez: Okay, Johnna, there's an email, or there's a message for you, with one of my deputy's emails, so that you can send him an email, and we'll set up some time to chat with you and get you the information that you need.

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00:57:18.390 --> 00:57:20.669

Johnna Flynn: Okay, thank you, I'd greatly appreciate that.

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00:57:20.670 --> 00:57:21.440

Margaret Gutierrez: Absolutely.

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00:57:23.900 --> 00:57:25.060

Margaret Gutierrez: Back to you, Maci.

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00:57:25.470 --> 00:57:36.150

Maci Morin: Okay, thank you so much. Next will be Sharayah Lane, followed by Gary Shu. You are on deck, so, let me find

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00:57:36.510 --> 00:57:39.659

Maci Morin: Oh, Sharayah, you disappeared for me.

383

00:57:39.860 --> 00:57:42.870

Maci Morin: If you are wanting to speak, please raise your hand. Perfect.

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00:57:43.100 --> 00:57:45.110

Maci Morin: Alright, you are ready to speak?

385

00:57:46.300 --> 00:58:01.489

Sharayah Lane: Okay, thank you. My name is Sharayah Lane. I'm a member of the Lummi Nation, therefore also a member of the Lummi Nation General Council, and that's the role that I'm speaking on behalf of today.

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00:58:09.390 --> 00:58:12.160

Maci Morin: Alright, Sharayah, we lost you for a sec, but I think you're back.

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00:58:13.300 --> 00:58:14.760

Sharayah Lane: Oh, can you hear me now?

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00:58:14.760 --> 00:58:15.130

Margaret Gutierrez: Yes.

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00:58:15.320 --> 00:58:16.410

Maci Morin: Thank you.

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00:58:16.810 --> 00:58:21.370

Sharayah Lane: Yes, so yes, member of the Lummi Nation, General Council.

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00:58:21.490 --> 00:58:35.120

Sharayah Lane: And, I've been working in the connectivity space for some years now, had the opportunity to see the, beginnings of TBCEP, the beginnings of BEAD, the changes that have taken place over the years.

392
00:58:35.160 --> 00:58:50.639
Sharayah Lane: I want to say that the TBCP program has been a really incredible program, through its life. And one of the most important aspects of TBCP

393
00:58:50.640 --> 00:59:04.090
Sharayah Lane: in my view, has been the, the leadership within NTIA. So the Tribal members and the folks with lots of experience working

394
00:59:04.090 --> 00:59:18.590
Sharayah Lane: on Tribal connectivity that are within the NTIA, who have been able to bridge that gap, who have been able to work directly with Tribes in getting their applications done and submitted.

395
00:59:18.590 --> 00:59:25.600
Sharayah Lane: In navigating the complexities, early on, a special shout out to Crystal Hottowe, who

396
00:59:25.600 --> 00:59:36.289
Sharayah Lane: Has just been an amazing leader and able to work with so many different Tribes and meet those unique challenges

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00:59:36.360 --> 00:59:39.619
Sharayah Lane: Earlier on in the TBCP program.

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00:59:39.780 --> 00:59:55.360
Sharayah Lane: And, I hope to see that continue, that there be folks with, a lot of experience and background working with Tribes, to be at NTIA and to continue to implement this program.

399
00:59:55.670 --> 01:00:13.970
Sharayah Lane: It's been one of the most important aspects, in my opinion. And I think speaking to the piece around LEOs and, fiber preference, thinking about how this relates to BEAD and the changes that were made to the BEAD program.

400
01:00:14.340 --> 01:00:18.860
Sharayah Lane: you know, I've always seen TBCP as

401
01:00:19.290 --> 01:00:27.569
Sharayah Lane: as being an effective program because it was separate from BEAD so early on when these programs were first being created.

402
01:00:27.680 --> 01:00:34.760
Sharayah Lane: You know, I myself was advocating for these

403
01:00:35.050 --> 01:00:40.120
Sharayah Lane: program being separate, understanding that when, Tribal

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01:00:40.190 --> 01:00:51.169

Sharayah Lane: Connectivity gets sort of rolled into larger state plans, that there's just way too many opportunities for, Tribes to be overlooked, for Tribal needs to

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01:00:51.170 --> 01:01:05.199

Sharayah Lane: not be considered, and as we've seen with the major changes to be for Tribes to be impacted, by these administrative changes, these policy changes that happened, near the end of that program.

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01:01:05.200 --> 01:01:14.500

Sharayah Lane: and TBCP being a consistent program. So, while we've seen significant changes to BEAD,

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01:01:14.550 --> 01:01:23.439

Sharayah Lane: TBCP being able to remain steady, and to stay focused on its mission, of serving Tribal communities.

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01:01:23.500 --> 01:01:38.800

Sharayah Lane: While thinking about this question about the funding changes that have happened in recent years, the policy changes that have happened, and really wanting to get current with

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01:01:38.810 --> 01:01:46.640

Sharayah Lane: Tribes, and how TBCP can, can sort of, make sure that it's staying current and relevant with Tribes.

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01:01:47.090 --> 01:02:08.059

Sharayah Lane: one of the things that I've heard from many of our speakers thus far, and that is top of mind for me, while the adoption and use aspect is critical and very important and very needed within Tribal communities, you know, we have so many Tribal members who

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01:02:08.060 --> 01:02:12.009

Sharayah Lane: May not have the same levels of digital literacy, like.

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01:02:12.010 --> 01:02:18.330

Sharayah Lane: As you would imagine, you know, not having connectivity until just within the past few years.

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01:02:18.330 --> 01:02:33.999

Sharayah Lane: We have a lot of Tribal members who are going to, need access to these, digital equity programs, and to add to that, the piece around workforce and community economic development.

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01:02:34.080 --> 01:02:42.450

Sharayah Lane: And that ties into the conversation around fiber versus LEOs. You know, some people have already shared, and I completely agree.

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01:02:42.540 --> 01:02:55.850

Sharayah Lane: That, maintaining a focus on fiber is not only critical to sovereignty, so for a Tribal nation to have the ability to say.

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01:02:56.080 --> 01:03:01.959
Sharayah Lane: You know, we're building and want to own and manage the infrastructure on our Tribal lands.

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01:03:02.040 --> 01:03:16.269
Sharayah Lane: LEO Satellite does not provide that, so it requires that those dollars are going out, but more importantly, the jobs, training, and education that come with, fiber builds.

418
01:03:16.390 --> 01:03:25.470
Sharayah Lane: And it's not something I've seen as much of, even in the considerations with the program design and reform.

419
01:03:25.530 --> 01:03:38.599
Sharayah Lane: of ensuring that Tribal communities and Tribal members are being trained up to be able to take on these positions. So, I know within my own Tribe that's been,

420
01:03:38.600 --> 01:03:54.269
Sharayah Lane: An issue area is needing to, you know, bring in non-Tribal members to do the work initially, but the goal being to have our Tribal members having the skills, training.

421
01:03:54.270 --> 01:04:01.620
Sharayah Lane: And resources that they need to fully manage and operate this infrastructure moving forward.

422
01:04:01.710 --> 01:04:13.209
Sharayah Lane: And, that's in addition to, digital literacy and digital inclusion, aspects of the NE program. And so, there's a real

423
01:04:13.550 --> 01:04:17.470
Sharayah Lane: opportunity here

424
01:04:17.910 --> 01:04:25.979
Sharayah Lane: to really transform, Tribal communities, but I think that needs to be looked at more holistically.

425
01:04:25.980 --> 01:04:38.529
Sharayah Lane: Looking well into the future, along with our infrastructure, and I'll just second everything that was said about the long-term cost and long-term sustainability.

426
01:04:38.530 --> 01:04:41.430
Sharayah Lane: of fiber, versus LEO.

427
01:04:41.430 --> 01:04:52.160
Sharayah Lane: And, the advantage that that gives Tribes to be able to really, transform our communities and our economies.

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01:04:52.160 --> 01:05:01.900
Sharayah Lane: As we think about the future of these networks and how they're being run, you know, the opportunities in this sector

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01:05:01.900 --> 01:05:13.259
Sharayah Lane: To create living wage jobs for Tribal members, and to really encourage Tribal nations to see themselves as leaders in this sector.

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01:05:13.260 --> 01:05:18.039
Sharayah Lane: And that's just the one piece that I see is missing, is around, workforce

431
01:05:18.040 --> 01:05:31.099
Sharayah Lane: development and economic development. I mean, we hear so much now around cutting costs and reducing costs, but from the way I understood these programs, these

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01:05:31.120 --> 01:05:49.550
Sharayah Lane: landmark programs, these once-in-a-generation programs, was that for the first time, these agencies were, were providing that initial investment. That for a lot of, Tribal communities, having access to fiber infrastructure

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01:05:49.550 --> 01:06:03.950
Sharayah Lane: Would not have been possible otherwise, and it's, you know, creating that initial investment for the gold standard of fiber, that we can then build off of and watch communities be transformed,

434
01:06:04.040 --> 01:06:19.910
Sharayah Lane: in their training, education, and in the lives of Tribal members. And so, even though, you know, we may have been a little later to the table as far as getting the infrastructure, that also presents the opportunity to do our planning

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01:06:19.910 --> 01:06:36.690
Sharayah Lane: For how this will impact whole communities, in a different way, that we can, be very holistic about that, and ensuring that, our community members have the skills that they need to, to sustain these networks locally.

436
01:06:36.690 --> 01:06:47.279
Sharayah Lane: And again, to transform communities through, breaking into these new sectors with fiber and wireless technologies. Again, that's not possible with LEOs.

437
01:06:47.280 --> 01:07:02.719
Sharayah Lane: And something I would like to see considered as we look at sort of getting current with where Tribes are at in their, build-outs and in the future of, of what, Tribal connectivity looks like.

438
01:07:04.330 --> 01:07:05.210
Sharayah Lane: Thank you.

439
01:07:06.160 --> 01:07:13.099
Margaret Gutierrez: Sharayah, thank you so much for your comments, and especially thank you for the comments about our team. We have

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01:07:13.170 --> 01:07:30.450
Margaret Gutierrez: really tried to make sure that we have people on the team that understand what it means to go to Council and get permission, or what it means to get a resolution, that live and breathe in our communities and have come out of working in our communities. So, I really appreciate the highlight for our team there, and the shout out for Crystal.

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01:07:30.450 --> 01:07:39.299
Margaret Gutierrez: Angie, I would imagine that you have questions on the workforce piece and, the digital equity space, so I'm going to turn it over to you for a second.

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01:07:39.300 --> 01:07:49.130
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you. Thanks, Margaret. You mentioned, about workforce development and being able to transform communities.

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01:07:49.130 --> 01:07:54.989
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: As we're thinking about, demonstrating the need for the different projects.

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01:07:54.990 --> 01:08:11.039
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Is there any specific, you know, in addition to, like, census tracts, you know, census data that you all rely upon to kind of track workforce development, you know, evidencing the need as well as, like, the growth?

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01:08:11.040 --> 01:08:13.080
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: And the impact in your communities?

446
01:08:14.570 --> 01:08:28.219
Sharayah Lane: I believe our TERO office has that data. You know, we look at, you know, different, opportunities within our community. One of the things, for example, that we've

447
01:08:28.260 --> 01:08:46.289
Sharayah Lane: done in recent years is, is allowing our Tribal members to break into the solar, solar industry and, learning more about, putting together and installing solar panels, for example. So this is

448
01:08:46.290 --> 01:08:49.439
Sharayah Lane: I think it would be

449
01:08:49.819 --> 01:09:07.189
Sharayah Lane: I know that we have that data as far as what our current workforce looks like and what the needs would be, and I think for something like this, it's a newer opportunity, and so we know that the need is there for our Tribal members to have access to

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01:09:07.189 --> 01:09:18.979
Sharayah Lane: To living wage jobs and meaningful employment. And, as we think about the future of, fiber technicians, for example.

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01:09:18.979 --> 01:09:28.929
Sharayah Lane: We've looked at, you know, call centers, for example, all the pieces that it's going to take to operate these networks.

452
01:09:28.939 --> 01:09:40.009
Sharayah Lane: And though we've relied on non-Tribal members to do that work initially so that we could get it done and get things off the ground, there

453
01:09:40.010 --> 01:09:50.950
Sharayah Lane: There wouldn't necessarily be the data for, what the impact and outcome of these programs could be, and something that we would want to track.

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01:09:50.950 --> 01:09:56.290
Sharayah Lane: But as far as the need for workforce development in our community, I believe we do have

455
01:09:56.290 --> 01:10:15.940
Sharayah Lane: that data of, you know, employment and things like that. But again, looking at the opportunities that are here for our community members to really be breaking into a whole new sector. And that would happen both at the short term and the long term. So when we think about

456
01:10:15.940 --> 01:10:23.610
Sharayah Lane: You know, training for fiber technicians, that could be more of a short-term goal, but then when we think about network management.

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01:10:23.610 --> 01:10:36.279
Sharayah Lane: And, work in the IT sector, that being something more long-term, in collaboration with our colleges and universities, and working with our younger people to start getting more comfortable

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01:10:36.280 --> 01:10:43.340
Sharayah Lane: In these spaces and seeing themselves represented in these spaces as well.

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01:10:43.390 --> 01:10:46.040
Sharayah Lane: So, more forward thinking, I would say.

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01:10:46.700 --> 01:10:47.870

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Great, thank you.

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01:10:53.310 --> 01:10:54.970

Margaret Gutierrez: Any other questions, Angie?

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01:10:56.690 --> 01:10:58.220

Margaret Gutierrez: Okay, Maci, back to you.

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01:10:59.710 --> 01:11:24.380

Maci Morin: All right, and just as a note, if you've already spoken and you have raised your hand again, we'll get back to you, well, once everybody else that hasn't spoken yet has an opportunity to do so, so please continue to leave your hand up, and we will call on you, after we get through the first round of folks. The next person will be Jerry, sorry, Gary Shu.

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01:11:24.760 --> 01:11:29.930

Maci Morin: followed by Tiffany Circle. So, Gary, you should, be ready to go.

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01:11:30.420 --> 01:11:49.879

Gary Shu: Hi, thank you. Good morning, good afternoon, everyone. Gary Shu, I'm the Infrastructure Director at Tanana Chiefs Conference. We're located in Fairbanks, Alaska, where it's minus 40 right now. And we represent 42 villages, 37 federally recognized Tribes in interior Alaska, in a region that's,

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01:11:49.880 --> 01:11:53.860

Gary Shu: Larger than 48 states, and about the size of the 49th Texas.

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01:11:55.020 --> 01:12:04.350

Gary Shu: I just want to, reiterate many of the things that my colleagues, especially the ones in Alaska, have mentioned. I'll try to be brief. Firstly,

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01:12:04.400 --> 01:12:16.830

Gary Shu: A big shout out to our grant manager, Nick Courtney, at TBCEP. He's been a great advocate for our activities and our work, and we really appreciate the opportunity to partner with NTIA.

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01:12:16.920 --> 01:12:28.429

Gary Shu: Specifically in interior Alaska, costs are extremely high. As I mentioned, we're a very dispersed and rural region.

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01:12:28.430 --> 01:12:32.950

Gary Shu: Many of our villages are not on the road network, they'

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01:12:32.950 --> 01:12:50.950

Gary Shu: All items, workers, equipment, parts must be flown in or barged in, and barges only run during the summer, so we only have a 3-4 month annual construction window when temperatures are able to allow for construction in many of our regions.

472
01:12:51.910 --> 01:13:07.620
Gary Shu: Specifically for LEO, most many of our, villages are located on, rivers, so this is not the mountainous part of Alaska that many people might think in the lower 48. It's a, vast,

473
01:13:07.620 --> 01:13:13.609
Gary Shu: hilly delta, rivers, lots of trees, it makes for difficult,

474
01:13:13.610 --> 01:13:29.550
Gary Shu: potential LEO use, in terms of sight lines. One particular arrangement in Alaska in this far north is that satellites are actually much more sparse. If you look at a Starlink

475
01:13:29.550 --> 01:13:49.059
Gary Shu: satellite map. There are many, many fewer polar satellites that are orbiting and that are available to provide bandwidth to our villages. And that by itself is going to limit, and make a distinction between what, our region is able to use for LEO broadband.

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01:13:49.060 --> 01:13:51.000
Gary Shu: And so, I just

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01:13:51.040 --> 01:14:02.029
Gary Shu: Just to quickly conclude, I would really advocate that cost is not the only factor that is being considered. technology-neutral

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01:14:02.080 --> 01:14:06.860
Gary Shu: Decision making Does make sense, but it should

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01:14:06.960 --> 01:14:19.580
Gary Shu: consider all the factors, not just cost. These performance factors that I've mentioned are important and cannot just be simply reflected in a price that's being offered by different proposals.

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01:14:19.940 --> 01:14:21.560
Gary Shu: I'll leave it there. Thank you very much.

481
01:14:25.380 --> 01:14:30.349
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you so much for your comments, and again, thank you for the highlight for our team.

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01:14:32.030 --> 01:14:33.220
Margaret Gutierrez: Back to you, Maci.

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01:14:35.440 --> 01:14:42.619
Maci Morin: Tiffany Circle, you did lower your hand, so if you'd like to speak, please, raise it back up, and I will unmute your line.

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01:14:43.230 --> 01:14:45.890
Maci Morin: Otherwise, we will go to the next speaker.

511
01:19:24.300 --> 01:19:33.339
Maci Morin: Great, thank you. Next, we will go to Valerie Fast Horse. Valerie, your line is unmuted.

512
01:19:42.630 --> 01:19:43.310
Valerie Fast Horse: Hello?

513
01:19:44.470 --> 01:19:45.490
Maci Morin: We can hear ya!

514
01:19:45.970 --> 01:19:47.090
Valerie Fast Horse: Oh, hi!

515
01:19:47.660 --> 01:19:59.850
Valerie Fast Horse: Good morning, 'esta skwítem. My name is Valerie Fast Horse, and I'm the IT Director for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and I also operate the Tribe's internet service provider, Red Spectrum Communications.

516
01:20:01.010 --> 01:20:05.490
Valerie Fast Horse: So, we're responsible for

517
01:20:05.620 --> 01:20:17.109
Valerie Fast Horse: rolling out broadband to all of the unserved and underserved areas on the reservation. We've started out on this journey, early on, back during the Community Connect program.

518
01:20:19.070 --> 01:20:35.150
Valerie Fast Horse: And I think the first thing that was very helpful for us to even get started was they allowed for 2 years of operational costs, which I think has been stated earlier on by other Tribes that they would like to have workforce development.

519
01:20:35.270 --> 01:20:39.540
Valerie Fast Horse: At that time, we didn't have anyone local.

520
01:20:39.710 --> 01:20:48.030
Valerie Fast Horse: who knew, so we just built everyone from the ground up, but it was the it was the arrangement of the Community Connect funding that allowed that to happen.

521
01:20:48.330 --> 01:20:54.539
Valerie Fast Horse: So they paid for our operations for the first 2 years, then after that, we were on our, on our own.

522
01:20:57.040 --> 01:21:12.109

Valerie Fast Horse: So, you know, that was one comment I want to make. The other one I want to make about LEOs is that that might be okay for some Tribes, but for other Tribes like us, we like to be in control of our own destiny, and we don't want to be under the,

523
01:21:12.440 --> 01:21:20.040
Valerie Fast Horse: under the priorities of other providers. We want to do our own priorities.

524
01:21:22.900 --> 01:21:32.509
Valerie Fast Horse: In alignment with, you know, Tribal goals, you know, like reaching elders, or people who are, disabled, or students, things like that.

525
01:21:33.180 --> 01:21:37.439
Valerie Fast Horse: So, LEOs, they, you know, they're only in alignment with their own priorities.

526
01:21:37.940 --> 01:21:47.939
Valerie Fast Horse: The other thing I want to say about the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program is that it was based on, I want to say census data, whether or not you were in poverty.

527
01:21:48.240 --> 01:21:58.590
Valerie Fast Horse: something like that, you have to be historical poverty or some sort of criteria, which is not fair to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, because we have Kootenai County

528
01:21:58.590 --> 01:22:08.920
Valerie Fast Horse: which is one of the fastest growing counties in the country, and a lot of rich people from California move into Kootenai County. Most of Kootenai County is off the reservation in the city of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

529
01:22:08.980 --> 01:22:21.680
Valerie Fast Horse: The rest of us poor guys on Kootenai County are on the reservation, so when we use census data, census makes us look like we're, like we don't have poor people around here.

530
01:22:21.880 --> 01:22:29.029
Valerie Fast Horse: So I thought that was a flaw in the, in the grant application itself. We got denied twice, by the way.

531
01:22:29.720 --> 01:22:32.649
Valerie Fast Horse: And, have not been able to use that program.

532
01:22:33.960 --> 01:22:39.810
Valerie Fast Horse: And I also concur with the

533
01:22:40.030 --> 01:22:57.379

Valerie Fast Horse: questioned by Nicholas Gray, or the opportunities by Nicholas Gray that he put on there for everything. I mean, he's just he's just right on. Administrative burdens, reporting burdens, you know, all of these things are barriers to applying. A lot of Tribes have to,

534
01:22:57.920 --> 01:23:12.499
Valerie Fast Horse: have to hire consultants to help them through these processes or, you know, to meet the stringent timelines. And oftentimes don't have the resources to do that, or if we do use our resources and then don't get granted

535
01:23:12.700 --> 01:23:21.209
Valerie Fast Horse: there's no reimbursement, we just sunk a bunch of money into trying to chase money that, if we don't ask for it, someone else is going to. We already know that.

536
01:23:21.450 --> 01:23:24.810
Valerie Fast Horse: So anyways,

537
01:23:25.830 --> 01:23:33.440
Valerie Fast Horse: Thank you guys for having this consultation, and I appreciate it, and I will just listen for the rest of the time now.

538
01:23:35.090 --> 01:23:54.909
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Valerie, for your comments. I do have one question on the poverty. Is there a better option or a reference that we should be using? This is definitely something that we've struggled with over both of our programs, is what data to use for the exact reason that you are mentioning. So is there, do you have an opinion on whether or not there's a better option?

539
01:23:54.910 --> 01:23:55.740
Margaret Gutierrez: sound?

540
01:23:55.740 --> 01:24:03.440
Valerie Fast Horse: Yeah, I found some Tribal-specific data that was on, I want to say, the University of Idaho that they collected.

541
01:24:03.610 --> 01:24:08.149
Valerie Fast Horse: or that they hosted on their site, so I found that data, and I used

542
01:24:08.290 --> 01:24:13.940
Valerie Fast Horse: I used that on one of the applications, and it wasn't, it wasn't sufficient.

543
01:24:19.010 --> 01:24:25.759
Valerie Fast Horse: It might have been American Indian census data, and that I used, and something collected by the University of Idaho.

544
01:24:27.640 --> 01:24:30.350

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: So, Valerie, are you suggesting that

545
01:24:30.610 --> 01:24:41.730
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: our programs have some flexibility in the data sources, you know, whether it's through the census or a third party, right?

546
01:24:41.880 --> 01:24:46.180
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Data source in order to demonstrate the poverty levels.

547
01:24:46.970 --> 01:24:50.719
Valerie Fast Horse: Yes, I am suggesting that there be flexibility on that,

548
01:24:50.880 --> 01:24:55.990
Valerie Fast Horse: Just because the data can skew obviously skew the numbers.

549
01:24:57.880 --> 01:24:59.190
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you.

550
01:25:01.520 --> 01:25:04.689
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you for that, that's really helpful. Back to you, Maci.

551
01:25:05.470 --> 01:25:12.660
Maci Morin: Thank you, thank you, Valerie. And Will, thank you for being extremely patient. We will go back to Will Micklin.

552
01:25:14.890 --> 01:25:15.880
Will Micklin: Thank you.

553
01:25:17.580 --> 01:25:18.580
Will Micklin: Can you hear me?

554
01:25:19.100 --> 01:25:20.010
Margaret Gutierrez: Yes, sir.

555
01:25:20.140 --> 01:25:23.589
Will Micklin: Okay, thank you, thank you so much. So,

556
01:25:23.810 --> 01:25:28.229
Will Micklin: I really appreciate the discussion from my colleagues.

557
01:25:29.950 --> 01:25:33.349
Will Micklin: And, just want to touch on 3 points. One is

558
01:25:34.260 --> 01:25:38.340
Will Micklin: the question of LEO versus

559
01:25:39.030 --> 01:25:45.879
Will Micklin: fiber. Again, I think it's a facts and circumstances question in Southeast.

560
01:25:46.070 --> 01:25:53.840
Will Micklin: LEO can be extremely, Southeast Alaska can be extremely helpful, because we have scattered

561
01:25:54.140 --> 01:26:02.580
Will Micklin: residences outside of communities and fixed wireless

562
01:26:03.000 --> 01:26:06.400
Will Micklin: facilities just to pick up

563
01:26:06.680 --> 01:26:19.360
Will Micklin: a couple of residents themselves, where they are in a bay or a river catchment, is extremely costly. So,

564
01:26:20.330 --> 01:26:28.889
Will Micklin: despite the performance deficiencies of LEO, it could be extremely helpful for us.

565
01:26:29.320 --> 01:26:36.469
Will Micklin: And necessary if we are going to fulfill our mandate to serve all unserved users.

566
01:26:37.080 --> 01:26:41.279
Will Micklin: So, you know, for us, it's really

567
01:26:41.810 --> 01:26:51.320
Will Micklin: depends on the discretion of the Tribe, and I would hope that the standard would be established so the Tribe decides, based on evidence presented.

568
01:26:51.540 --> 01:26:54.390
Will Micklin: Rather than there be an absolute.

569
01:26:54.530 --> 01:27:01.580
Will Micklin: benchmark as the make or break. On the

570
01:27:01.690 --> 01:27:08.670
Will Micklin: Adoption challenge. I think that has been a question raised by discussion.

571
01:27:08.850 --> 01:27:21.140
Will Micklin: So infrastructure alone does not solve the digital divide. The loss of the Affordable Connectivity Program, ACP, left a critical gap.

572
01:27:21.440 --> 01:27:28.879
Will Micklin: We recommend reforming the use and adoption category to allow for Tribal-managed connectivity subsidies.

573
01:27:29.310 --> 01:27:35.339
Will Micklin: Tribes should be empowered to use their own enrollment data to qualify households.

574
01:27:35.720 --> 01:27:39.569
Will Micklin: Bypassing complex federal verifiers.

575
01:27:39.740 --> 01:27:50.650
Will Micklin: And presenting the data, particularly, as has been mentioned, our census data is often skewed by,

576
01:27:50.860 --> 01:27:56.020
Will Micklin: Data, census areas that are extremely large.

577
01:27:56.540 --> 01:28:02.140
Will Micklin: in Alaska and include users we're not serving.

578
01:28:02.260 --> 01:28:04.910
Will Micklin: Nor are we required to serve, and yet

579
01:28:05.250 --> 01:28:09.399
Will Micklin: That, distorts the, the data.

580
01:28:09.630 --> 01:28:14.290
Will Micklin: The income data that is, often a benchmark

581
01:28:14.820 --> 01:28:20.689
Will Micklin: And furthermore, in high-cost regions like Alaska, subsidy tiers

582
01:28:20.890 --> 01:28:28.299
Will Micklin: really must reflect the actual operating cost, at least \$75 to \$100 plus per month.

583
01:28:29.020 --> 01:28:31.740
Will Micklin: Less than that.

584
01:28:31.980 --> 01:28:44.380
Will Micklin: It does not reflect the high cost that we are presented with. Again, in the entire spectrum, from build-out to operations and maintenance, from transport.

585
01:28:44.520 --> 01:28:53.300

Will Micklin: Of materials and supplies to the site, to construction during the build season, and then to operation.

586

01:28:53.940 --> 01:29:02.050

Will Micklin: So we believe that best works as most effectively, as Tribal-led.

587

01:29:02.260 --> 01:29:12.480

Will Micklin: Where Tribes own the infrastructure, rates are set for the community benefit, and the workforce development keeps technical expertise and jobs within our villages.

588

01:29:13.340 --> 01:29:20.839

Will Micklin: And, to me, the critical the critical gap here, and this is my point of emphasis today.

589

01:29:21.180 --> 01:29:25.029

Will Micklin: Is that Tribes need to become

590

01:29:25.550 --> 01:29:30.090

Will Micklin: I mean, it needs to be a Tribal-led broadband deployment

591

01:29:30.290 --> 01:29:31.820

Will Micklin: for this program.

592

01:29:31.990 --> 01:29:42.219

Will Micklin: And where the disconnect, if I may use that term, currently in available subsidies is with the FCC Connect America

593

01:29:42.380 --> 01:29:47.210

Will Micklin: Or in Alaska, the Alaska Connect Fund, the ACF,

594

01:29:47.710 --> 01:29:52.649

Will Micklin: And that is money that is made available

595

01:29:52.780 --> 01:30:02.440

Will Micklin: that supports O&M operations and maintenance-type expenses for rural and high-cost service in Alaska for the Alaska

596

01:30:02.850 --> 01:30:04.080

Will Micklin: Connect Fund.

597

01:30:04.280 --> 01:30:11.239

Will Micklin: So, this is the ACF, It's part of the FCC's Universal Service High Cost Support.

598

01:30:12.360 --> 01:30:19.040

Will Micklin: That's, tailored for our unique geography and our sparse communities that are widespread.

599

01:30:19.530 --> 01:30:22.050

Will Micklin: Within difficult-to-serve areas.

600

01:30:22.460 --> 01:30:33.390

Will Micklin: And, it provides ongoing support through 2034 for both fixed and mobile voice and broadband services to ensure service in high-cost areas.

601

01:30:33.690 --> 01:30:38.940

Will Micklin: Support is tied to performance plans with build-out and service commitments.

602

01:30:39.980 --> 01:30:46.589

Will Micklin: It does provide O&M money.

603

01:30:46.750 --> 01:30:50.620

Will Micklin: Within the context of operating a supported service.

604

01:30:50.750 --> 01:30:53.750

Will Micklin: So, recurring support for operating costs.

605

01:30:54.330 --> 01:30:59.359

Will Micklin: It's not a one-time capital grant, it provides monthly recurring support.

606

01:30:59.960 --> 01:31:03.649

Will Micklin: To carriers participating in the program.

607

01:31:04.070 --> 01:31:06.480

Will Micklin: That's similar in structure to other

608

01:31:06.630 --> 01:31:10.390

Will Micklin: universal service fund high-cost mechanisms.

609

01:31:11.130 --> 01:31:13.749

Will Micklin: And under the rule, FCC rules.

610

01:31:13.920 --> 01:31:23.230

Will Micklin: funded carriers may use the Alaska Connect Fund in Alaska to support both operating expenses and capital expenses.

611

01:31:23.510 --> 01:31:34.220

Will Micklin: Needed to deploy, upgrade, importantly, and maintain mobile voice and broadband networks, including necessary middle-mile connections.

612
01:31:34.620 --> 01:31:39.440
Will Micklin: So this is recurring money that helps carriers pay for O&M-type costs.

613
01:31:39.710 --> 01:31:47.469
Will Micklin: It's in a separate pot of money labeled O&M, rather it's Universal Service Support counted toward

614
01:31:47.650 --> 01:31:50.160
Will Micklin: The provider's eligible cost space.

615
01:31:51.060 --> 01:32:04.180
Will Micklin: So, performance standards have to be met, and coverage milestones and the like protect the, the efficient use of federal monies.

616
01:32:04.450 --> 01:32:10.249
Will Micklin: The monthly support payments

617
01:32:10.580 --> 01:32:17.359
Will Micklin: that carriers receive are based on formulas and eligibility tied to the USF High Cost Fund.

618
01:32:18.490 --> 01:32:25.909
Will Micklin: And, again, performance plan compliance and middle-mile support, and mobile and fixed support

619
01:32:26.290 --> 01:32:33.720
Will Micklin: is all part of the plan with recent ACF,

620
01:32:33.820 --> 01:32:52.099
Will Micklin: Alaska Connect Fund emphasis has been on mobile deployments and upgrades, like 5G, fixed voice, broadband carriers that also participate in the tailored support plans. Importantly, this is only for designated universal service ETC carriers.

621
01:32:52.910 --> 01:33:03.869
Will Micklin: So the key takeaway here is that what ACF is, it's a recurring subsidy program under the FCC's Universal Service Fund for High Cost Alaska Service.

622
01:33:04.640 --> 01:33:09.049
Will Micklin: What it effectively pays for are ongoing service costs.

623
01:33:09.180 --> 01:33:21.500
Will Micklin: as part of a delivering voice and broadband to remote communities, including maintenance and operations of network facilities tied to that service. But what it is not,

624
01:33:22.120 --> 01:33:34.839

Will Micklin: it's not a general fund, a general federal operations grant outside of the carrier's service obligations, and Tribes are not eligible

625
01:33:35.240 --> 01:33:43.620
Will Micklin: Tribes, municipalities, or not anyone that's a non-ETC Entity cannot apply

626
01:33:44.060 --> 01:33:49.040
Will Micklin: and is not eligible for the funding unless they become an ETC.

627
01:33:50.060 --> 01:33:56.930
Will Micklin: And this is the type of support that Tribes need. O&M is critical

628
01:33:57.420 --> 01:34:09.170
Will Micklin: for us to succeed, the question about sustainability, this is all about operations and maintenance. Deployment, yes. Upgrade, absolutely. Maintenance, imperatively.

629
01:34:09.750 --> 01:34:22.610
Will Micklin: So what this program needs to include is the ACF type of support provided now to ETCs

630
01:34:23.100 --> 01:34:36.419
Will Micklin: but where Tribes are made eligible as the owners and providers of the network. We don't need to provide voice. We can, but it's very complex. It can be very costly.

631
01:34:36.810 --> 01:34:39.509
Will Micklin: But what we need is eligibility

632
01:34:39.620 --> 01:34:45.769
Will Micklin: for, without having to become an ETC, where we have to provide voice

633
01:34:46.200 --> 01:34:48.789
Will Micklin: Along with, data and broadband.

634
01:34:49.650 --> 01:34:53.320
Will Micklin: To me, that's incredibly

635
01:34:53.440 --> 01:34:58.130
Will Micklin: important if we're to succeed. We need that support.

636
01:34:58.450 --> 01:35:04.750
Will Micklin: The, TBCP program was important because the ETC carriers

637
01:35:04.910 --> 01:35:18.429

Will Micklin: the ETCs in Alaska, we're never gonna provide, we're never gonna deploy broadband services to our communities. We had to do it through the TBCP, but in order to succeed.

638

01:35:18.620 --> 01:35:21.350

Will Micklin: We need the same support.

639

01:35:21.610 --> 01:35:25.710

Will Micklin: that the ETCs the legacy ETCs.

640

01:35:25.810 --> 01:35:33.040

Will Micklin: Enjoy without providing the essential advanced broadband services to our communities that we are doing.

641

01:35:33.270 --> 01:35:45.680

Will Micklin: But which we are going to find very difficult to sustain unless we have O&M support that the Alaska Connect Fund provides for ETCs.

642

01:35:45.900 --> 01:35:50.060

Will Micklin: Or in the lower 48, the Connect America plan.

643

01:35:50.860 --> 01:35:51.940

Will Micklin: Thank you.

644

01:35:53.870 --> 01:35:57.850

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you so much for those additional comments. Anyone have clarifying questions?

645

01:36:01.350 --> 01:36:06.149

Margaret Gutierrez: All right, with that, I think we'll move to the next slide and question.

646

01:36:23.530 --> 01:36:24.980

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Alright, if you wanna...

647

01:36:26.450 --> 01:36:30.489

Maci Morin: I'm sorry, y'all having technical difficulties.

648

01:36:31.050 --> 01:36:32.070

Maci Morin: been...

649

01:36:38.000 --> 01:36:42.760

Maci Morin: I'll just share this one for now, so I won't keep you waiting.

650

01:36:46.320 --> 01:36:48.479

Maci Morin: Apologies for all the black boxes.

651
01:36:48.840 --> 01:36:49.660
Maci Morin: Okay.

652
01:36:51.840 --> 01:36:53.060
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: No worries.

653
01:36:56.080 --> 01:36:59.700
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: As Maci's bringing it on the slide, okay, there we go.

654
01:37:00.020 --> 01:37:05.000
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: So we're gonna turn to the alignment with the BEAD program, and I know we've had

655
01:37:05.160 --> 01:37:10.759
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: you know, some quite a bit of conversation, on the last topic around the BEAD program.

656
01:37:10.870 --> 01:37:21.910
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: But as BEAD continues to roll out and accelerate nationwide, it has become the primary vehicle for large-scale broadband deployment.

657
01:37:22.290 --> 01:37:33.519
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: At the same time, NTIA recognizes that the TBCP and Native Entities Grant Programs play a distinct and important role in supporting Tribal connection

658
01:37:33.730 --> 01:37:34.890
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: activity.

659
01:37:35.230 --> 01:37:45.900
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: With that in mind, NTIA is considering how the TBCP and Native Entities Grant Programs can be aligned with BEAD in ways that are complementary.

660
01:37:46.130 --> 01:37:48.789
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Coordinated and non-duplicative.

661
01:37:48.920 --> 01:37:57.070
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: While still maintaining the flexibility needed to address Tribal-specific needs and priorities.

662
01:37:57.420 --> 01:38:12.470
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: This includes how these programs may work together across planning, deployment, adoption, and sustainability activities, particularly in areas where BEAD may not fully address Tribal connectivity challenges.

663
01:38:13.030 --> 01:38:23.770

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: NTIA is also assessing what activities should be prioritized for TBCP and the Native Entity's funding as BEAD progresses.

664
01:38:23.860 --> 01:38:33.189
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: given remaining broadband needs on Tribal lands, and the timing and structure of BEAD implementation at the state level.

665
01:38:33.490 --> 01:38:37.849
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: So, to frame this dialogue, we are posing two related questions.

666
01:38:38.210 --> 01:38:41.190
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: How can NTIA adapt

667
01:38:41.530 --> 01:38:50.459
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: It's TBCP and Native Entities Grant Programs to be aligned with, complementary to, and non-duplicative of BEAD,

668
01:38:50.600 --> 01:39:02.180
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: And given the current status and progress of BEAD, what activities should be the primary focus of TBCP and Native Entities moving forward?

701
01:44:07.290 --> 01:44:15.159
Maci Morin: Okay, next, we will have Tiffany's Circle, and that'll be followed up by Ernie. Tiffany, you should be able to speak.

702
01:44:17.220 --> 01:44:24.910
Tiffany Circle: Good morning, Tiffany Circle, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. I'm the IT Director, and I'm here in Nespalem, Washington.

703
01:44:24.910 --> 01:44:39.440
Tiffany Circle: I just want to make a statement to the second question. I feel that if until we know how many Tribes have been funded through the NTIA BEAD program, we cannot really say that BEAD is being equally distributed to Tribal nations in a non-duplicative manner.

704
01:44:39.440 --> 01:44:52.359
Tiffany Circle: Tribes should also be able to determine what methods of deployments are to be used. NTIA here in Washington State has made that decision for Tribes. They weaponize consent against us,

705
01:44:52.360 --> 01:45:08.519
Tiffany Circle: So that's kind of where we are with, like, even consent when we talk about consultation. We went back and forth for a lot of months on how consultation was to be determined. What is consultation? So when we rolled that out with BEAD, there was a lot of confusion between the state and the Tribes.

706
01:45:08.520 --> 01:45:19.160

Tiffany Circle: Another thing, if we had TBCP they should work together and figure out what the actual cost is per BSL and not come up with some arbitrary number that's used by an individual.

707

01:45:19.160 --> 01:45:31.419

Tiffany Circle: sitting at a computer 20 states away from Washington on the Colville Reservation. We don't even know how they come up with this number, how you get through, you know, to determine a cost per BSL. That's never been described to us.

708

01:45:31.540 --> 01:45:39.229

Tiffany Circle: One thing that we would I would state is no changes to the NOFO. Once the NOFO is published, it stays as is.

709

01:45:39.230 --> 01:46:04.149

Tiffany Circle: when we went through BEAD with Washington State, the NOFO changed 3 times. No deadline was never changed. The NOFO changed continuously, and that's hard for Tribes to do, because we don't have a full-time engineer, or network design, or any person of that manner. We're going through consultants and grant writers, and as we've noticed as IIJA was rolled out, those are hard to find. Consultants and grant writers, engineers, things along those lines.

710

01:46:04.440 --> 01:46:20.880

Tiffany Circle: we all have to kind of get in line because a lot of them are they've pretty much been overburdened, too, throughout the states. The next thing I know with BEAD is, you know, we don't want to align it in such a way with BEAD where there's this threat of the use of universal service funds if you're funded.

711

01:46:21.050 --> 01:46:35.940

Tiffany Circle: There's this topic of, if you're funded for BEAD, or maybe even TBCP in the future, you can't use universal service funds to offset the cost of operations for low-income households that could be eligible for these programs.

712

01:46:38.230 --> 01:46:39.270

Tiffany Circle: Thank you.

713

01:46:43.630 --> 01:46:44.869

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thank you, Tiffany.

714

01:46:46.530 --> 01:46:48.239

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Any clarifying questions?

715

01:46:50.440 --> 01:46:51.780

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: All right, Maci?

716

01:46:52.470 --> 01:47:00.669

Maci Morin: Great, thank you. Next will be Ernie. Ernie, I am opening your line. Next will be Will Micklin. Ernie, go ahead.

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01:47:01.570 --> 01:47:05.070

Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you again. I think one of the first things

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01:47:05.200 --> 01:47:07.309

Ernie Rasmussen: That can be done to,

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01:47:08.930 --> 01:47:14.930

Ernie Rasmussen: to avoid some of the challenging situations that, Tribes encountered with BEAD.

720

01:47:15.220 --> 01:47:21.949

Ernie Rasmussen: is removal of the State Broadband Office as a pass-through Entity for those funds.

721

01:47:22.370 --> 01:47:33.930

Ernie Rasmussen: Work directly with the Tribes. Do not use the state as a fund administrator, an awardee, and then the Tribes as a subrecipient.

722

01:47:34.190 --> 01:47:38.719

Ernie Rasmussen: We saw we encountered, you know, one challenge after another.

723

01:47:38.850 --> 01:47:42.970

Ernie Rasmussen: In that dynamic, with€!

724

01:47:43.370 --> 01:47:46.780

Ernie Rasmussen: the Federal Program Officer for BEAD,

725

01:47:47.260 --> 01:47:49.949

Ernie Rasmussen: Working through the State Broadband Office.

726

01:47:50.100 --> 01:47:53.879

Ernie Rasmussen: and the State Broadband Office having to relay those messages

727

01:47:54.240 --> 01:47:57.700

Ernie Rasmussen: The shifting requirements that they laid on us, the

728

01:47:57.880 --> 01:48:07.640

Ernie Rasmussen: I heard someone mention earlier, these extreme timelines that do not allow for Tribes, Tribal governments. You wouldn't put this on a city government.

729

01:48:07.890 --> 01:48:15.100

Ernie Rasmussen: any government to have a 24-hour deadline to offer a letter of consent or non-consent.

730

01:48:15.510 --> 01:48:20.359

Ernie Rasmussen: You wouldn't do it to any other local government, and

731

01:48:20.480 --> 01:48:23.990

Ernie Rasmussen: The unrealistic expectation that a Tribal government

732

01:48:24.920 --> 01:48:28.379

Ernie Rasmussen: Can meet those deadlines. And,

733

01:48:28.530 --> 01:48:33.000

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, and then putting the state broadband office to be able to, you know, to relay that message.

734

01:48:33.590 --> 01:48:38.950

Ernie Rasmussen: The other impact on that dynamic is

735

01:48:39.260 --> 01:48:41.760

Ernie Rasmussen: It's an additional cost.

736

01:48:41.880 --> 01:48:44.470

Ernie Rasmussen: Of administration.

737

01:48:44.760 --> 01:48:48.989

Ernie Rasmussen: The State Broadband Office takes a portion of that funding.

738

01:48:49.440 --> 01:48:54.860

Ernie Rasmussen: And they have to pay those salaries. They pay their contractors.

739

01:48:55.120 --> 01:49:00.490

Ernie Rasmussen: And it's another layer of bureaucratic funding that's been carved out.

740

01:49:01.070 --> 01:49:04.469

Ernie Rasmussen: And, does not get to the community it needs it the most.

741

01:49:05.520 --> 01:49:09.279

Ernie Rasmussen: And so it's a

742

01:49:09.610 --> 01:49:19.750

Ernie Rasmussen: It's a challenging situation when we see this lack of recognition of the sovereign

743

01:49:19.870 --> 01:49:23.800

Ernie Rasmussen: Nation of Tribal governments, or the sovereign nature of Tribal governments.

744

01:49:24.160 --> 01:49:26.200

Ernie Rasmussen: That, that,

745

01:49:26.370 --> 01:49:35.799

Ernie Rasmussen: And rather than, you know, working directly with the Tribe, a sovereign Tribal government, it is instead working through a state broadband office.

746

01:49:36.570 --> 01:49:42.239

Ernie Rasmussen: And so honoring that government-to-government relationship,

747

01:49:42.450 --> 01:49:45.720

Ernie Rasmussen: Is, is has gotta be paramount.

748

01:49:45.970 --> 01:49:54.090

Ernie Rasmussen: And again, there's a lot of good reason as to, you know, from a financial

749

01:49:54.280 --> 01:50:01.209

Ernie Rasmussen: Reason, from a reason of upholding, you know, the

750

01:50:01.800 --> 01:50:05.959

Ernie Rasmussen: the federal trust responsibility to Tribes,

751

01:50:06.580 --> 01:50:10.490

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, another portion of,

752

01:50:12.940 --> 01:50:22.400

Ernie Rasmussen: the BEAD challenging, the challenge with BEAD. I didn't, I didn't want to put this into a situation where we were just gonna, you know, use this as

753

01:50:22.810 --> 01:50:27.380

Ernie Rasmussen: a chance to, to tear down BEAD, but we saw BEAD as,

754

01:50:27.540 --> 01:50:32.520

Ernie Rasmussen: as a failure in many, at least with the, with the Colville Tribes.

755

01:50:32.820 --> 01:50:39.509

Ernie Rasmussen: Again, that lack of, that lack of direct relationship with the federal government.

756

01:50:40.200 --> 01:50:46.579

Ernie Rasmussen: place the Colville Tribes in a in a very challenging situation.

757

01:50:46.930 --> 01:50:55.820

Ernie Rasmussen: Where we weren't working across directly, and, and it failed to honor our sovereignty, and it, it put not only a

758

01:50:56.020 --> 01:50:59.390

Ernie Rasmussen: Not only the project in peril, but,

759
01:50:59.970 --> 01:51:02.210
Ernie Rasmussen: You know that we had that we had designed.

760
01:51:02.580 --> 01:51:04.420
Ernie Rasmussen: But also the relationship.

761
01:51:04.720 --> 01:51:09.430
Ernie Rasmussen: that the Colville Tribes had with NTIA in peril.

762
01:51:09.800 --> 01:51:10.670
Ernie Rasmussen: Alright.

763
01:51:11.590 --> 01:51:16.049
Ernie Rasmussen: So this consultation is welcome. We didn't see this.

764
01:51:16.440 --> 01:51:18.140
Ernie Rasmussen: Under the BEAD program.

765
01:51:18.500 --> 01:51:22.769
Ernie Rasmussen: And so, I'll stop with that.

766
01:51:23.270 --> 01:51:24.119
Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you.

767
01:51:27.550 --> 01:51:28.520
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thank you, Ernie.

768
01:51:30.240 --> 01:51:33.060
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: your hands back up. Did you have some additional comments?

769
01:51:34.500 --> 01:51:35.779
Ernie Rasmussen: No, no.

770
01:51:35.780 --> 01:51:37.449
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay. Thank you.

771
01:51:38.340 --> 01:51:48.449
Maci Morin: Thank you, Ernie. Next will be Will Micklin, followed by Robert Griffin.
So Will, you just disappeared.

772
01:51:51.050 --> 01:52:10.370
Margaret Gutierrez: Mason, before we go to Will, can I jump back to Ernie for a second on the consultation piece? One of the requirements for BEAD was Tribal consultation, and I'd like to just hear your input on what that looked like for your state. I know that that varied state to state, and where that

773
01:52:10.550 --> 01:52:16.930
Margaret Gutierrez: You know, failure of BEAD, if you will, as you called it, really became an issue.

774
01:52:19.290 --> 01:52:20.849
Ernie Rasmussen: My mic's still on.

775
01:52:21.260 --> 01:52:21.840
Maci Morin: Yes.

776
01:52:21.840 --> 01:52:22.510
Ernie Rasmussen: Okay.

777
01:52:23.460 --> 01:52:28.490
Ernie Rasmussen: We invited the State Broadband Office a number of times, to the

778
01:52:29.230 --> 01:52:37.100
Ernie Rasmussen: to the Colville Reservation to engage in that direct state Government to Tribal government consultation.

779
01:52:37.300 --> 01:52:41.269
Ernie Rasmussen: And we did not have that opportunity. They continued to

780
01:52:42.890 --> 01:52:54.290
Ernie Rasmussen: really find, you know, they put a timeline on it. We would hope to do that within this within 2024, and then, you know I mean, it just was an ongoing and never it never happened.

781
01:52:54.950 --> 01:53:00.090
Ernie Rasmussen: when it came to the, you know, even before BEAD was, was,

782
01:53:00.980 --> 01:53:06.769
Ernie Rasmussen: Finalized with the rules, and we went through the whole commentary.

783
01:53:07.020 --> 01:53:12.080
Ernie Rasmussen: Again, there was, there was it was such a long process.

784
01:53:12.800 --> 01:53:23.170
Ernie Rasmussen: That, you know, when we worked through with that particular administration, again, the State Broadband Office has gone through 3 directors since BEAD rolled out.

785
01:53:23.790 --> 01:53:33.400
Ernie Rasmussen: And, and when we went through with that director, and invited them to the Colville Reservation, they could not make it. They couldn't, they could not.

786

01:53:33.570 --> 01:53:35.820

Ernie Rasmussen: Their consultation periods

787

01:53:35.930 --> 01:53:39.840

Ernie Rasmussen: were poorly, advertised.

788

01:53:40.800 --> 01:53:47.089

Ernie Rasmussen: You weren't certain that you were really having a consultation. Instead, it felt like it was a Tribal office hours?

789

01:53:47.890 --> 01:53:50.730

Ernie Rasmussen: and

790

01:53:50.850 --> 01:53:59.570

Ernie Rasmussen: And, and then afterwards, after, you know, we thought we had all we had the rules all established, that it was going to be a fiber-forward program.

791

01:54:00.360 --> 01:54:07.619

Ernie Rasmussen: Then we saw, you know, again, this shifting of the rules with no Tribal consultation whatsoever.

792

01:54:08.320 --> 01:54:13.420

Ernie Rasmussen: And, and so that's, you know, again, it placed everything in peril.

793

01:54:13.820 --> 01:54:18.389

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, we had a we had a solid project that we believed was, you know,

794

01:54:18.890 --> 01:54:23.689

Ernie Rasmussen: was gaining the support of the State Broadband Office under the previous administration, and

795

01:54:23.800 --> 01:54:26.069

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, and it had survived.

796

01:54:26.250 --> 01:54:32.100

Ernie Rasmussen: Different, leadership changes, and then, you know, with the change in the federal administration.

797

01:54:32.770 --> 01:54:35.670

Ernie Rasmussen: And the shifting of the rules under the BEAD program.

798

01:54:36.040 --> 01:54:44.210

Ernie Rasmussen: It we just knew, almost immediately, With the with the, the language around

799

01:54:44.340 --> 01:54:47.510

Ernie Rasmussen: LEO as the lowest cost alternative technology.

800
01:54:48.480 --> 01:54:55.430
Ernie Rasmussen: And the assumption that that was going to be the answer for, for the Colville Tribes.

801
01:54:55.900 --> 01:55:03.350
Ernie Rasmussen: It, it we knew that our, our, our project was probably not going to be funded. That

802
01:55:03.960 --> 01:55:07.710
Ernie Rasmussen: High-cost threshold number was, was, again, that

803
01:55:07.840 --> 01:55:10.950
Ernie Rasmussen: just as the, as Tiffany Circle had mentioned.

804
01:55:11.250 --> 01:55:14.720
Ernie Rasmussen: There was never any explanation as to how 12,500

805
01:55:14.940 --> 01:55:18.029
Ernie Rasmussen: Was established as the high-cost threshold number.

806
01:55:18.350 --> 01:55:26.330
Ernie Rasmussen: And so it was, You know, again, I don't think there was any reality check through Tribal consultation.

807
01:55:30.400 --> 01:55:31.800
Margaret Gutierrez: Okay, thank you so much, Ernie.

808
01:55:32.440 --> 01:55:33.140
Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you.

809
01:55:33.470 --> 01:55:38.149
Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, Will, if you're ready, sorry to interrupt you, but you can come back on in.

810
01:55:38.860 --> 01:55:41.090
Will Micklin: Sure. Thank you. Can you hear me?

811
01:55:41.240 --> 01:55:42.050
Margaret Gutierrez: Again.

812
01:55:42.600 --> 01:55:46.540
Will Micklin: Thank you, Will Micklin, Vice President, Tlingit and Haida.

813
01:55:47.330 --> 01:55:54.779

Will Micklin: So, you know, my concerns with the BEAD Program is, it is,

814

01:55:56.200 --> 01:56:01.800

Will Micklin: wholly separate and apart from the TBCP program. Its mandate is entirely different.

815

01:56:02.250 --> 01:56:10.270

Will Micklin: the BEAD program is ending up with little duplication in Tribal areas because that's not their mandate.

816

01:56:11.210 --> 01:56:13.300

Will Micklin: It's run by the state.

817

01:56:13.860 --> 01:56:20.710

Will Micklin: there's, you know, there's great folks in the Alaska Tribal Broadband Office, the State Office.

818

01:56:20.880 --> 01:56:24.409

Will Micklin: But they have, They have their mandate.

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01:56:25.080 --> 01:56:32.910

Will Micklin: And, so I'm CEO of a Tribe in California that's deploying broadband, and,

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01:56:33.240 --> 01:56:37.230

Will Micklin: Or intending to, and We

821

01:56:37.700 --> 01:56:40.690

Will Micklin: Begged for consultation and didn't get it.

822

01:56:41.220 --> 01:56:44.259

Will Micklin: We tried to participate, couldn't.

823

01:56:45.910 --> 01:56:55.240

Will Micklin: So it, what it ended up being is really it's a handout to carriers. It's entirely legacy, legacy carrier focused.

824

01:56:55.620 --> 01:56:57.300

Will Micklin: Just look at the awards.

825

01:56:57.830 --> 01:57:08.840

Will Micklin: They're using the same recipes or formulas for disbursement of funds that they've used to pay carriers in the past to upgrade their network.

826

01:57:09.060 --> 01:57:14.319

Will Micklin: not to deploy, New service to unserved individuals.

827
01:57:14.480 --> 01:57:19.130
Will Micklin: Which was the best part of TBCP

828
01:57:19.300 --> 01:57:23.120
Will Micklin: BEAD is a trickle-down, or in a

829
01:57:23.410 --> 01:57:33.830
Will Micklin: Apparently, the effect, intended effect, is a trickle-down, because the deployments have been principally, almost substantially, to served areas.

830
01:57:34.180 --> 01:57:39.230
Will Micklin: Apparently, in order to ensure revenue recovery.

831
01:57:39.650 --> 01:57:47.880
Will Micklin: And ensure sustainability for their networks, but that means that they're not deploying to unserved areas or to Tribes.

832
01:57:49.200 --> 01:57:55.769
Will Micklin: So where TBCP was taking folks from, no service to

833
01:57:55.920 --> 01:58:00.640
Will Micklin: Some service, even if it was 25.3,

834
01:58:00.840 --> 01:58:07.470
Will Micklin: the BEAD is not doing that. It's just upgrading existing services in served areas.

835
01:58:08.200 --> 01:58:15.949
Will Micklin: So, it's, the funds are going to carriers whose mandate is to make profit.

836
01:58:16.380 --> 01:58:20.280
Will Micklin: Their mandate is not to serve unserved people.

837
01:58:21.280 --> 01:58:23.000
Will Micklin: That's not who they connect.

838
01:58:23.810 --> 01:58:29.469
Will Micklin: So, I think there needs to be a apprehension that

839
01:58:30.000 --> 01:58:32.370
Will Micklin: for the, the TBC program.

840
01:58:32.870 --> 01:58:36.410
Will Micklin: To achieve sustainability, it has to pay for it.

841
01:58:37.020 --> 01:58:38.700
Will Micklin: And,

842
01:58:39.050 --> 01:58:47.579
Will Micklin: If you do otherwise, then you're just gonna increase, gonna ensure profit for existing carriers who are not gonna deploy

843
01:58:47.730 --> 01:58:50.930
Will Micklin: To unserved communities and Tribal communities.

844
01:58:51.930 --> 01:58:57.190
Will Micklin: The, you know, for what they do, they don't need

845
01:58:57.520 --> 01:59:00.769
Will Micklin: Consultation with Tribes, or permission of Tribes.

846
01:59:01.070 --> 01:59:02.950
Will Micklin: Because what they're doing is not

847
01:59:03.060 --> 01:59:05.899
Will Micklin: The mandate is not to serve Tribal interests.

848
01:59:06.650 --> 01:59:17.360
Will Micklin: So, The, we don't have to worry about duplication of

849
01:59:17.700 --> 01:59:23.219
Will Micklin: BEAD duplicating TBCP, because they're operating in different areas.

850
01:59:23.360 --> 01:59:27.900
Will Micklin: I think that's what you're here on the call today, is our...

851
01:59:28.210 --> 01:59:33.349
Will Micklin: The benefit we are going to derive from BEAD is substantially nil

852
01:59:34.260 --> 01:59:38.980
Will Micklin: And, so I think that just speaks to

853
01:59:39.470 --> 01:59:43.869
Will Micklin: our comments that what the program needs, what TBCP could

854
01:59:44.460 --> 01:59:48.990
Will Micklin: could best benefit Tribes for is a Connect.

855
01:59:49.600 --> 01:59:54.620
Will Micklin: plan, like a Connect America or Alaska Connect fund.

856
01:59:55.200 --> 01:59:58.220
Will Micklin: For Tribes under the program without the

857
01:59:58.680 --> 02:00:02.339
Will Micklin: FCC requirement that we become ETCs.

858
02:00:02.870 --> 02:00:12.440
Will Micklin: That's the kind of support we need, that's the kind of support that ensures sustainability, and that is what BEAD is not providing.

859
02:00:12.650 --> 02:00:13.740
Will Micklin: to Tribes.

860
02:00:13.900 --> 02:00:20.560
Will Micklin: Their, their mandate and, and standards are just wholly and separate and apart.

861
02:00:20.790 --> 02:00:26.550
Will Micklin: From Tribal interests, and, it's gonna be very difficult to

862
02:00:27.640 --> 02:00:31.479
Will Micklin: for them to restructure, I think, because they are

863
02:00:31.690 --> 02:00:40.379
Will Micklin: deploying along those, according to that mission and purpose. Tribes' mission and purpose is different.

864
02:00:40.580 --> 02:00:51.310
Will Micklin: It's the TBCP, Equitable, making sure that there's an equitable service to unserved communities.

865
02:00:51.620 --> 02:00:57.590
Will Micklin: And even pulling up underserved communities, and that's where we need the support.

866
02:00:58.570 --> 02:00:59.299
Will Micklin: Thank you.

867
02:01:02.930 --> 02:01:03.870
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Will.

868
02:01:06.750 --> 02:01:08.040
Margaret Gutierrez: Maci, back to you.

869
02:01:08.900 --> 02:01:12.910

Maci Morin: Alright, next will be Robert Griffin.

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02:01:13.080 --> 02:01:14.999

Maci Morin: Robert, you are up.

871

02:01:17.830 --> 02:01:22.579

Robert Griffin: Thank you. Yeah, so Rob Griffin, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

872

02:01:22.950 --> 02:01:35.359

Robert Griffin: So, you know, we tried to create a very good process for carriers who have Tribal engagement and consultation with us,

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02:01:35.710 --> 02:01:52.849

Robert Griffin: And also trying to, you know, have that available for any of the other Tribal nations in the state of Oklahoma to utilize the same process by creating a form that was easy to fill out and follow, you know, requests via email.

874

02:01:53.010 --> 02:01:57.279

Robert Griffin: And, you know, the feedback was pretty limited,

875

02:01:57.490 --> 02:02:00.119

Robert Griffin: You know, what typically happened is that

876

02:02:00.420 --> 02:02:04.819

Robert Griffin: Everybody would send a form in at the last minute, and

877

02:02:05.010 --> 02:02:08.879

Robert Griffin: you know, we had to work through the wording of Tribal consent.

878

02:02:09.430 --> 02:02:21.549

Robert Griffin: you know, so this kind of ties into many of the issues everybody has talked about, that if I have to take this to Tribal council, it's not going to happen for 60 days. Is that going to be a requirement of the state?

879

02:02:21.550 --> 02:02:33.060

Robert Griffin: And then the state is showing that within their NOFO, that it is a requirement that they need to get consent from the Tribe. So, you know, that tied into a couple of things.

880

02:02:33.130 --> 02:02:36.179

Robert Griffin: In terms of providing the consent.

881

02:02:36.290 --> 02:02:48.449

Robert Griffin: and then also the turnaround time on all the things that we did. So I did meet with NTIA and Philip Powell and his team, and you know, I made several comments as to

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02:02:48.670 --> 02:02:52.409

Robert Griffin: you know, we're the same way. We have limited resources.

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02:02:52.590 --> 02:02:58.259

Robert Griffin: And we have grant writers and engineering teams that we have consulted with.

884

02:02:58.370 --> 02:03:05.310

Robert Griffin: And when we receive notification, and we only have, in many cases, a day or two days.

885

02:03:05.450 --> 02:03:12.010

Robert Griffin: you know, sometimes we get an email late Friday, and then we have until Monday at 5 to respond.

886

02:03:12.190 --> 02:03:18.509

Robert Griffin: And, you know, all of these contractors that I work with, Or, are getting paid.

887

02:03:18.540 --> 02:03:30.640

Robert Griffin: And when you have multiple consultations, you know, within your group, and you're trying to update very technical forms and KMZ files and data.

888

02:03:30.640 --> 02:03:42.579

Robert Griffin: then, you know, it takes time, and you're always on a quick response. And then, typically, you would send it in, and you don't hear back for a while, so you're not, you know, you're not even sure that

889

02:03:42.880 --> 02:03:45.340

Robert Griffin: This was an acceptable response.

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02:03:45.910 --> 02:03:53.760

Robert Griffin: And, you know, what I think is the big part is, is you're incurring additional costs along the way.

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02:03:54.770 --> 02:03:59.939

Robert Griffin: you're, you're just piling up these costs, and so I asked for

892

02:04:00.110 --> 02:04:11.269

Robert Griffin: you know, reasonable expenses to be a part of the BEAD application for awarded to come back to us, so that we could pay our contractors that way. You know, and then

893

02:04:11.490 --> 02:04:21.249

Robert Griffin: I think it also could be a part of the Native Equity Program. I think that's right on I think that's what it's called, Native Equity, that if you were awarded

894

02:04:21.440 --> 02:04:36.210

Robert Griffin: you know, any type of award for broadband build-out, you could use some of those funds towards that as well. So I think that could be a good solution, and I've communicated that a couple of times to different people, and I think that's, you know.

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02:04:36.480 --> 02:04:56.299

Robert Griffin: the way that you can subsidize some of that, but if you don't win a BEAD award, then, you know, you're probably just out, unless we can find some other way to take care of those Entities. Because what we don't want to have happen is that a Tribal nation puts all the effort, time, energy, you know, contracts with somebody, and then

896

02:04:56.470 --> 02:05:15.010

Robert Griffin: you know, and it makes it difficult for everybody to get paid. That's not what we want to have happen, because we want everybody to continue to support Tribal nations. Now, here's what I'm seeing, is that when we send in our responses, and we change the nets for coverage, we've had carriers drop out because

897

02:05:15.010 --> 02:05:26.110

Robert Griffin: You know, for whatever reason, they didn't fulfill the Tribal consent response, either in a timely fashion, or they just didn't do it at all, and

898

02:05:26.110 --> 02:05:38.990

Robert Griffin: you know, we had requested up front to the broadband office that if an application came in, that we would be able to see the coverage area and the BSLs that go along with it, and it was agreed upon that that would happen.

899

02:05:38.990 --> 02:05:50.699

Robert Griffin: But that never happened. We never received communication from any carrier, through the broadband office that showed what was under consideration for

900

02:05:50.700 --> 02:05:53.310

Robert Griffin: For this service for BEAD.

901

02:05:53.310 --> 02:06:18.129

Robert Griffin: Now, when they send in, if they sent in a request for support, they would have to supply a KMZ with that, but at the same time, you know, there was usually a short turnaround time to get to that. And then, you know, if we saw that there was significant overlap to an area that we applied for as a carrier, as an ISP, then, you know, we denied consent for that area. And so that does a couple of things. When you deny consent, which

902

02:06:18.130 --> 02:06:19.759

Robert Griffin: We have the right to do.

903

02:06:19.760 --> 02:06:26.710

Robert Griffin: And They break up their ability to deliver, because after the benefit of the bargain round.

904

02:06:26.770 --> 02:06:36.130

Robert Griffin: Then, you know, everybody changed their designs and their solutions from primarily fiber to whatever it'll take to win the project.

905

02:06:36.130 --> 02:06:55.959

Robert Griffin: And so when that happened, when the cost per passing came down to \$12,500, and I mean, it was 20, then it was 18, then we landed on \$12,500, so we had to go through multiple iterations to get to 12,500. You know, hundreds of hours with our consultants. And, you know, at the end of the day, we've got these small nets that

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02:06:55.990 --> 02:07:12.560

Robert Griffin: are only represented by a handful of BSLs, and what I know will happen is, you know, because the option is written into there, and we were told this, that if it's a smaller net, don't worry about it, you can drop it at some point. Which means that

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02:07:12.700 --> 02:07:19.239

Robert Griffin: you might get funding for that net, and then you can turn around and say, no, I don't want to serve that net at a later date.

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02:07:19.450 --> 02:07:36.549

Robert Griffin: And then, if you don't hold people accountable for finding out, did that net get served or not, there's actually no way to know unless you do a physical, physical engagement, you know, you call the person, if you can get ahold of the person, and then find out if they got

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02:07:36.550 --> 02:07:53.810

Robert Griffin: any type of internet service. So all of these issues are small in some cases, but they keep getting piled upon. And I think, you know, all of this was made for the carriers, it wasn't made for any of the Tribal nations to respond to.

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02:07:54.240 --> 02:07:56.920

Robert Griffin: It was very much, it seemed like.

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02:07:57.370 --> 02:08:05.739

Robert Griffin: every, all the carriers were approached first, and then they came to us with what was left over. And because of that gap in communication.

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02:08:05.770 --> 02:08:18.490

Robert Griffin: they weren't working, you know, the carriers were not working with us directly up front, so we went ahead and made assumptions based on the coverage maps of unserved BSLs that we would create projects to serve them.

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02:08:18.490 --> 02:08:38.539

Robert Griffin: And ultimately, we did have to adjust to a lesser technology. We had to drop many homes from fiber home, which is our primary way to deliver service, to fixed wireless. And, you know, when you do that, when you have a primary function of delivering service, like fiber to the home.

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02:08:39.240 --> 02:08:56.509

Robert Griffin: and you start to deploy fixed wireless on top of that, you now have more operating systems, more service delivery systems, different operators, and so it's adding to our overall maintenance costs. I mean, these are all things that aren't really taken into effect.

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02:08:56.510 --> 02:09:05.709

Robert Griffin: And I think, you know, one of the recommendations, I went to the very first broadband meeting, and I raised my hand, it was an open meeting.

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02:09:05.710 --> 02:09:25.550

Robert Griffin: And I made the suggestion that, that the state have some folks that had network engineering background and experience, you know, and when I say experience, they've been doing this for 20, 30 years. They know how networks work, how connectivity works, and they can make suggestions on how to

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02:09:25.760 --> 02:09:43.960

Robert Griffin: work with carriers on a technical level to, you know, understand how, how this is supposed to be put together. But that, that never happened. And, you know, since then, of course, the meetings are no longer, haven't been, for over a year now, open to any public comment.

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02:09:43.960 --> 02:09:52.950

Robert Griffin: You have to send a request in a month in advance, and usually you only get about a day and a half notice when the meeting occurs. So,

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02:09:52.950 --> 02:10:07.690

Robert Griffin: you kind of just have to constantly send in the notes, and then hopefully it gets addressed whenever they have a meeting. But typically, it doesn't. So, you know, you add on top of all that, I mean, I think if there was a way for the next round of TBCP to

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02:10:08.150 --> 02:10:17.830

Robert Griffin: you know, continually have mapping. I mean, the folks, you know, at NTIA TBCP have been fantastic at the mapping piece, helping us

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02:10:17.840 --> 02:10:40.070

Robert Griffin: see what's out there, double-checking what we put together, understanding what happens in the past, and then what the variance is in the different programs. So, you know, Margaret, your group has done an amazing job of doing that. And when I think, if we could figure out a way to put in the NE programs, a way to offset that cost if it was

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02:10:40.450 --> 02:10:51.159

Robert Griffin: absorbed into application processes, and you're awarded a program, awarded something, that you can be able to do that. And then also, you know.

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02:10:51.460 --> 02:11:07.080

Robert Griffin: put some physical assets. Everything's wrapped around service and assets of the network, but, you know, you gotta think about this. If you're gonna provide training in rural America.

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02:11:07.100 --> 02:11:20.080
Robert Griffin: there typically will need to be a physical asset, like a building or an infrastructure in some cases, that has to be provided. If there was a way to, you know, create something like that so that

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02:11:20.120 --> 02:11:29.949
Robert Griffin: Something could be put together, and it could be, you know, maybe there's a school, and you can get a remote building added to the school, and it can serve dual

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02:11:29.950 --> 02:11:40.599
Robert Griffin: that kind of thing. I mean, there's ways to put this together so that it's amenable to everyone. So that's, I mean, that's my feedback, so Yakoke, thank you.

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02:11:43.580 --> 02:11:46.490
Margaret Gutierrez: Rob, can you, for the record, just state your title, please?

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02:11:47.550 --> 02:11:50.840
Robert Griffin: Yes, Broadband Director, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

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02:11:50.840 --> 02:11:51.860
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, sir.

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02:11:56.470 --> 02:11:58.210
Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, back to you, Maci.

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02:11:59.020 --> 02:12:10.149
Maci Morin: You? Alright, I did see Valerie Fast Horse raise her hand, and I no longer see it raised, so Valerie, if you'd like to speak, there you are, perfect. Okay, you are ready to go.

932
02:12:16.240 --> 02:12:16.920
Valerie Fast Horse: Hello?

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02:12:17.550 --> 02:12:18.900
Margaret Gutierrez: Yes, ma'am, we can hear you.

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02:12:20.030 --> 02:12:27.880
Valerie Fast Horse: Okay, again, for the record, my name is Valerie Fast Horse, and I am the IT Director for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

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02:12:28.040 --> 02:12:31.990
Valerie Fast Horse: In North Idaho?

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02:12:33.510 --> 02:12:37.590

Valerie Fast Horse: I wanted to speak out to the non-duplicative subject.

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02:12:38.260 --> 02:12:44.119

Valerie Fast Horse: As I mentioned earlier, our first build-out was under the Community Connect Grant, which, you know, was a

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02:12:44.360 --> 02:12:47.910

Valerie Fast Horse: 75% grant and 25% Tribal match.

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02:12:48.290 --> 02:12:51.630

Valerie Fast Horse: And so we, you know, the Tribe had some investment into that project.

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02:12:51.970 --> 02:12:58.579

Valerie Fast Horse: And then we had a second build-out, and it was a 50-50 grant loan under the BIT program, so the Tribe had actually,

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02:12:59.570 --> 02:13:03.830

Valerie Fast Horse: received that award through the USDA RUS under the BIT program.

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02:13:04.170 --> 02:13:09.200

Valerie Fast Horse: So, we still have a debt service that we have to, pay off from that build-out.

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02:13:09.910 --> 02:13:20.859

Valerie Fast Horse: So, and we've been actively building out for over 20 years with both grant funding and our own finances, and we made these investments out of necessity because carriers weren't interested in building here.

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02:13:21.190 --> 02:13:34.610

Valerie Fast Horse: But now, fast forward, there's this grant funding that comes along. Back during RDOF, that was the USDA RUS again, Starlink was already awarded, to build out on our reservation.

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02:13:34.980 --> 02:13:44.080

Valerie Fast Horse: So they have already started building on our reservation using grant funds. I don't know what that means, because they're way up in the air, I don't see anything on the ground.

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02:13:44.250 --> 02:13:50.640

Valerie Fast Horse: But they do provide services here. And now, fast forward again, they're applying for BEAD funds on a reservation.

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02:13:50.730 --> 02:14:06.919

Valerie Fast Horse: So, if awarded the BEAD funds, then they will become doubly subsidized competition, which isn't fair, because we've been investing our own blood, sweat, and tears, and money, and boots on the ground, and then they come in, they're probably not even going to step foot on the reservation.

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02:14:07.320 --> 02:14:13.930
Valerie Fast Horse: So, I just want to make those comments that Tribal consultation, that, you know, they should be

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02:14:14.400 --> 02:14:27.630
Valerie Fast Horse: They should be forced to come and meet with the Tribe and get Tribal consent, because I can guarantee the Tribe won't consent to them being subsidized competition on households where we have a debt service.

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02:14:35.130 --> 02:14:39.340
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Valerie, for those comments. That's really important for us to note. I appreciate that.

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02:14:39.590 --> 02:14:40.360
Valerie Fast Horse: Alright.

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02:14:40.520 --> 02:14:43.490
Valerie Fast Horse: Oh, I have one more question, or comment.

953
02:14:43.780 --> 02:14:45.210
Valerie Fast Horse: It's a different subject.

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02:14:45.490 --> 02:14:51.190
Valerie Fast Horse: And it's on what should the focus be. So I want to just, say that

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02:14:51.640 --> 02:15:11.489
Valerie Fast Horse: earlier on, I was saying that we already have a network, but we have a lot of routes that we haven't built out to yet. They're engineered and designed, but we don't have the funding to build to those, and so I continue to look for funding for areas where we haven't reached yet. And that's where I applied for the TBCP twice, and I did,

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02:15:11.500 --> 02:15:12.989
Valerie Fast Horse: Some other grants, and

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02:15:13.200 --> 02:15:20.909
Valerie Fast Horse: just, we just weren't hitting it, so we struck out, I think, 5 times now, so we're hoping we get BEAD.

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02:15:21.160 --> 02:15:24.840
Valerie Fast Horse: But we have Tribal and non-Tribal households on the reservation.

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02:15:25.170 --> 02:15:29.980
Valerie Fast Horse: And I'm wondering if TBCP can be flexible enough

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02:15:30.110 --> 02:15:36.720

Valerie Fast Horse: To allow us to employ new service to all households, rather than just bypassing the non-Tribals to reach the Tribals.

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02:15:38.450 --> 02:15:40.270

Valerie Fast Horse: When they live in the same neighborhoods.

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02:15:40.990 --> 02:15:42.280

Valerie Fast Horse: Or the same routes.

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02:15:46.470 --> 02:15:47.589

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Valerie.

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02:15:52.280 --> 02:15:53.690

Valerie Fast Horse: Alright, you're welcome.

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02:15:54.460 --> 02:16:01.420

Maci Morin: Thanks, Valerie. All right, next, we have Joseph Carella. Joseph, you are online.

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02:16:04.120 --> 02:16:05.070

Joseph Carella: Thank you.

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02:16:05.230 --> 02:16:18.199

Joseph Carella: Hi, Joseph Carella, I'm the Director of Grants for Entrust. We are supporting two Tribes in both their prior TBCP applications and in BEAD applications. With Mr. McLin's consent, I will speak for EBKI.

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02:16:18.770 --> 02:16:23.229

Joseph Carella: And I think many of you are aware of the other Tribe I'm supporting.

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02:16:24.770 --> 02:16:28.470

Joseph Carella: Two comments I would make on collaboration around, BEAD.

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02:16:28.670 --> 02:16:35.009

Joseph Carella: First is around, the accelerate, the need for accelerated mapping adjustments in both Tribal cases.

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02:16:35.370 --> 02:16:41.759

Joseph Carella: We, duly complied with the FCC's broadband data collection challenge process and submitted

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02:16:42.469 --> 02:16:51.079

Joseph Carella: locations to the FCC that never found their way into the final FCC maps that are being used by each of the states for allocation.

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02:16:51.660 --> 02:17:04.360

Joseph Carella: We have the broadband data collection map, and we have the NTIA's funding map. We'd like to make sure that we could that you could turn around changes as quickly as possible, so that we are eligible for funding.

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02:17:04.639 --> 02:17:07.869

Joseph Carella: For those locations, number one. Number two,

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02:17:08.410 --> 02:17:12.080

Joseph Carella: I realize this is difficult, but it must be asked,

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02:17:12.420 --> 02:17:13.769

Joseph Carella: As of this moment.

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02:17:13.959 --> 02:17:23.320

Joseph Carella: with all 56 states and territories having applied for BEAD, and all but 3 having submitted their provisional BEAD awards.

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02:17:23.469 --> 02:17:29.109

Joseph Carella: Of the \$42 billion, less than 50% has been allocated to provisional BEAD awardees.

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02:17:30.820 --> 02:17:38.130

Joseph Carella: It would be, in these four states I'm working in, each of them has at least \$300 million of BEAD funding

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02:17:38.510 --> 02:17:48.960

Joseph Carella: unallocated provisional awards and available for use. I am aware of Senator Ernst's Recapture Act proposal, which will return any unallocated

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02:17:50.059 --> 02:17:52.160

Joseph Carella: provisional funding

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02:17:52.629 --> 02:17:54.040

Joseph Carella: Back to the Treasury.

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02:17:54.389 --> 02:18:04.909

Joseph Carella: But I'd like to at least put on record the request that why couldn't some of the unallocated BEAD funds be repurposed for Tribal broadband?

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02:18:05.770 --> 02:18:07.309

Joseph Carella: For the benefits of the Tribe.

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02:18:07.860 --> 02:18:14.590

Joseph Carella: I realize that is a challenge, legislatively and statutorily, but it needs to be considered.

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02:18:14.719 --> 02:18:15.540

Joseph Carella: Thank you.

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02:18:21.629 --> 02:18:22.709

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thank you, Joseph.

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02:19:33.260 --> 02:19:34.930

Maci Morin: Okay, that

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02:19:35.320 --> 02:19:42.769

Maci Morin: completes our speaker queue here. Any last questions before we move on to the next topic? Any comments, sorry?

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02:19:48.680 --> 02:19:51.529

Maci Morin: Alright, seeing none, I think it goes back to you.

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02:19:52.860 --> 02:19:58.320

Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, so for topic 3, we're going to talk about maximizing the impact and use of funds.

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02:19:58.470 --> 02:20:08.669

Margaret Gutierrez: NTIA recognizes that Tribal communities are often asked to do more with limited resources, and that cost-effective, practical approaches are critical to advancing meaningful broadband connectivity on Tribal lands.

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02:20:08.740 --> 02:20:21.189

Margaret Gutierrez: In this section, we're considering how TBCP and Native Entities funding can be structured and implemented in ways that stretch every dollar as far as possible, while still supporting high-quality, reliable, and sustainable connectivity solutions.

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02:20:21.350 --> 02:20:37.859

Margaret Gutierrez: This includes strategies such as approaches to planning, deployment, partnerships, project phasing, and leveraging other funding sources. While remaining responsive to local conditions and priorities. We're also examining what has worked well in practice, as well as lessons learned from challenges that may have limited impact or increased costs.

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02:20:37.980 --> 02:20:51.920

Margaret Gutierrez: To frame this dialogue, our question is, what steps should NTIA take to stretch every dollar as far as possible and maximize the impact of TBCP and Native Entities funding with respect to broadband connectivity on Tribal lands? And with that, we will open it up.

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02:21:05.380 --> 02:21:12.099

Maci Morin: Alright, the first person I see is Tiffany Circle. So, Tiffany, I am unmuting your line.

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02:21:15.240 --> 02:21:24.580

Tiffany Circle: Good morning. One of the, one of the things that I noticed from our first round with TBCP that was pretty, a high a very high cost for us.

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02:21:25.000 --> 02:21:35.620

Tiffany Circle: Through the grant was the NEPA process. I'd asked this multiple times, and I'll ask it again, is that NEPA be streamlined and be and Tribes be allowed to conduct this process themselves?

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02:21:36.140 --> 02:21:49.909

Tiffany Circle: And once we're conducting that process, that our environmental, subject matter experts within our Tribe, their word be taken at what it is and not be questioned. When it, when we were going through the NEPA process with TBCP,

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02:21:49.910 --> 02:21:58.200

Tiffany Circle: For some reason, it stretched out to almost 10 months, and that's 10 months of a consultant, again, writing that report for us. That's a high dollar amount.

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02:21:58.200 --> 02:22:15.189

Tiffany Circle: But then once we got to a certain point where, the consultant went through and we ran that through our internal integrated resource management plan here at the Colville Tribes, and we conduct NEPAs, we're a forestry, you know, we're a forestry-driven Tribe, so we conduct at least 20 NEPAs a year, internally here.

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02:22:15.190 --> 02:22:22.119

Tiffany Circle: And once my integrated resource management people made comments on that, NEPA and that plan.

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02:22:22.200 --> 02:22:37.200

Tiffany Circle: our word wasn't taken. It was questioned. It was questioned by NTIA's environmentalists. It was questioned in the sense that, is this a really true finding? Things along those lines. So I do ask that if the if the project area is 100%

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02:22:37.230 --> 02:22:43.939

Tiffany Circle: Tribal land and our allotted land, that Tribes be able to streamline that process and get that done much quicker.

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02:22:44.220 --> 02:22:48.090

Tiffany Circle: The other portion is, we've seen a huge

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02:22:49.330 --> 02:22:57.389

Tiffany Circle: increase in cost when it came to joint use, because we do have a hybrid solution when it comes to underground and aerial fiber, and

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02:22:57.600 --> 02:23:10.290

Tiffany Circle: We noticed that NTIA, TBCP took a very hands-off approach to this, and I imagine BEAD is going to do the same thing, but they don't, they didn't really it was left to Tribes to try to bargain with these utility carriers.

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02:23:10.350 --> 02:23:19.889

Tiffany Circle: And the, you know, we were left with it in the sense that we were the ones to report the high cost to the Transportation Committee by state.

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02:23:19.890 --> 02:23:41.589

Tiffany Circle: So, if that was if that's something that NTIA TBCP can step in and kind of come to a streamlined process with the utility carriers, that would be great to have that type of support, but I noticed we didn't really we had conversations around it with our TBCP representatives, but it was never really something that, NTIA could really help us resolve.

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02:23:42.270 --> 02:23:43.270

Tiffany Circle: Thank you.

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02:23:46.940 --> 02:23:48.109

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Tiffany.

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02:23:49.090 --> 02:23:50.369

Margaret Gutierrez: Back to you, Maci.

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02:26:24.390 --> 02:26:27.120

Margaret Gutierrez: Looks like that's all the questions, Maci, on this one.

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02:26:28.240 --> 02:26:32.660

Maci Morin: I agree. Last call, anybody like to weigh in on topic 3?

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02:26:32.780 --> 02:26:37.890

Maci Morin: Oh, we do have one person. Ernie, I will unmute your line.

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02:26:39.820 --> 02:26:46.930

Ernie Rasmussen: I just want to weigh in again on the, you know, the direct award to the Tribes and avoiding,

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02:26:47.840 --> 02:26:52.669

Ernie Rasmussen: Awards to state broadband offices, and then Tribes as a subrecipient.

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02:26:54.800 --> 02:26:55.640

Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you.

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02:27:01.170 --> 02:27:02.220

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Ernie.

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02:27:04.640 --> 02:27:08.250

Margaret Gutierrez: Okay. I'll turn it over to Angie.

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02:27:09.460 --> 02:27:10.350
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay.

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02:27:10.780 --> 02:27:26.569
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: All right, next we're going to turn to reducing administrative burden. So NTIA recognizes that administrative requirements, while essential for accountability, can sometimes create unnecessary complexity or strained capacity.

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02:27:26.570 --> 02:27:32.170
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Particularly for Tribal governments managing multiple federal programs at the same time.

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02:27:32.460 --> 02:27:40.489
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Through the TBCP and the Native Entities Grant Program, NTIA is examining opportunities to streamline processes.

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02:27:40.690 --> 02:27:51.250
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Promote greater flexibility and better align grant requirements across programs while maintaining appropriate oversight and stewardship of federal funds.

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02:27:51.450 --> 02:28:07.100
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: This includes efforts to provide clearer guidance, more consistent support, and fewer duplicative or burdensome requirements across the full grant life cycle, from the application and award through implementation, reporting, and closeout.

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02:28:07.500 --> 02:28:17.760
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: NTIA is also considering potential reforms aimed at reducing red tape and improving accessibility and responsiveness to Tribal needs.

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02:28:18.650 --> 02:28:22.700
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: To frame the upcoming dialogue, we pose the following question.

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02:28:22.820 --> 02:28:30.289
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: What steps can NTIA take to reduce administrative burdens and red tape for Tribal governments?

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02:28:39.320 --> 02:28:50.730
Maci Morin: Okay, thank you, Angie. We got a few hands here. The first one I see is Valerie Fast Horse, and then Boyd Cummings will be next. So, Valerie, you are unmuted.

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02:28:53.940 --> 02:29:03.240
Valerie Fast Horse: Thank you. Is this just for TBCP, or is there a letter of credit, requirement on that?

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02:29:07.810 --> 02:29:10.899

Margaret Gutierrez: For TBCP, no, but for BEAD, yes.

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02:29:11.090 --> 02:29:11.990

Valerie Fast Horse: Okay.

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02:29:12.170 --> 02:29:18.350

Valerie Fast Horse: Okay, so I was thinking about BEAD, never mind. I was just gonna say, get rid of the letter of credit.

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02:29:18.450 --> 02:29:30.729

Margaret Gutierrez: That's a| I mean, that is a good comment, though. We'll attach it to the BEAD question on aligning the BEAD program. I know that that's something that we've heard repeatedly from Tribes, so you're welcome to make that comment if you'd like.

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02:29:30.950 --> 02:29:33.709

Valerie Fast Horse: Yeah, yeah, so the letter of credit,

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02:29:35.070 --> 02:29:50.490

Valerie Fast Horse: with even reducing it to the lower percent, I think 10% or whatever of the grant amount, it still ties up our funding, because once we get the letter of credit from the bank, they use that as the collateral, and then so that money's frozen, and we can't use it. It's just

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02:29:50.850 --> 02:29:58.219

Valerie Fast Horse: And so it's put some constraints and some even hesitation in the Tribal Council on do they want to freeze their money or not?

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02:30:03.340 --> 02:30:05.119

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you, Valerie.

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02:30:08.440 --> 02:30:13.889

Maci Morin: Okay, and next we will go to Boyd Cummings. Boyd, you are unmuted.

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02:30:14.120 --> 02:30:14.660

Valerie Fast Horse: Oop?

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02:30:14.950 --> 02:30:15.500

Boyd Cummings: Cool.

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02:30:15.910 --> 02:30:17.420

Boyd Cummings: Can you hear me?

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02:30:17.420 --> 02:30:18.170

Maci Morin: Yes, we can.

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02:30:18.170 --> 02:30:25.269

Boyd Cummings: Okay, good. No, the only thing I ever hear about constant. well, I don't know about constant the complaint I hear more often than anything from

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02:30:25.420 --> 02:30:32.870

Boyd Cummings: Across the street in our administration building is a lack of amount of money that we can actually use for administrative costs.

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02:30:33.140 --> 02:30:38.769

Boyd Cummings: I don't always notice that, because I sit over here in my little cubicle.

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02:30:38.880 --> 02:30:47.190

Boyd Cummings: being surrounded by monitors all day. But, I hear that from our accounting department quite a bit. And then on the,

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02:30:48.100 --> 02:30:49.330

Boyd Cummings: on the,

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02:30:51.290 --> 02:30:56.910

Boyd Cummings: BEAD funding, I think for us, the big prob, the big holdup is the match that comes along with it.

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02:30:57.020 --> 02:30:58.280

Boyd Cummings: It's,

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02:30:59.340 --> 02:31:05.279

Boyd Cummings: kind of so much that we it's just not something we can afford to really even consider at this point. But that's basically it.

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02:31:07.950 --> 02:31:11.620

Margaret Gutierrez: So, can I ask a clarifying question on the BEAD match?

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02:31:11.800 --> 02:31:18.250

Margaret Gutierrez: would your opinion be that it impacts the Tribe's ability to participate in BEAD, even if they wanted to?

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02:31:18.480 --> 02:31:19.160

Boyd Cummings: Yes.

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02:31:19.360 --> 02:31:33.679

Boyd Cummings: The state, the amount of money we had the state was talking to us about was about \$18 million. Well, it's actually about \$22, but our match would be, like, \$4.5 million, and like I said, we're a small Tribe, that's just more than we have the ability to,

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02:31:34.020 --> 02:31:35.410

Boyd Cummings: Handle.

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02:31:37.280 --> 02:31:43.100

Boyd Cummings: And more than Centranet really wants to do, too. So, anyway, but yes.

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02:31:43.600 --> 02:31:44.440

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you.

1080

02:31:46.140 --> 02:31:46.670

Boyd Cummings: And!

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02:31:46.670 --> 02:31:50.069

Maci Morin: And Boyd, for the record, can we get your title and the.

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02:31:50.070 --> 02:31:50.419

Boyd Cummings: Oh, sorry.

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02:31:50.420 --> 02:31:52.489

Maci Morin: The Tribal nation you're representing, please?

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02:31:52.490 --> 02:31:54.510

Boyd Cummings: Sorry, I'm... Sorry, I'm Boyd Cummings.

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02:31:54.510 --> 02:31:54.940

Maci Morin: No worries.

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02:31:54.940 --> 02:32:03.379

Boyd Cummings: I'm representing the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma. I am the IT director, and I forget what my title is on the grant, but yeah.

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02:32:03.810 --> 02:32:05.890

Maci Morin: No, that's perfect. Thank you so much.

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02:32:05.890 --> 02:32:06.480

Boyd Cummings: Thank you.

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02:32:09.110 --> 02:32:15.729

Maci Morin: Alright, next we will hop over to Tiffany Circle. Tiffany, you are unmuted.

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02:32:16.500 --> 02:32:23.069

Tiffany Circle: In regards to this question for administrative burdens, I know that, as a Round 1 recipient, we,

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02:32:23.480 --> 02:32:40.409

Tiffany Circle: I think we're, like, in our second or third change on grant reporting portals. If we can just I know that's, you know, it's up to you guys, and sometimes

it's even over, the funding agency, but if we could just stick to one grant portal, that'd be great. One of the issues we've seen was when we put in our when we

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02:32:40.410 --> 02:32:54.329

Tiffany Circle: The original grant portal we used, and we put in our signing authorities and that, didn't migrate to the second grant portal, and that second grant portal is already used for other grants within the Colville Tribe, so then it, gave us a long list of individuals who were

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02:32:54.590 --> 02:33:08.510

Tiffany Circle: typically able to use that grant portal, and in order for us to revise that, it would start to cut down on people like me who are in, charge of the project for TBCP. I would have if there was, like, a

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02:33:08.770 --> 02:33:20.579

Tiffany Circle: portion of it where I would have to give up my ability to log in for someone else to log in to upload financials. So it just doesn't seem to work as well as we would want it to. The other one is

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02:33:20.650 --> 02:33:31.409

Tiffany Circle: signing authority. I don't know how we could, I guess, revise signing authority, and that person who is the authorized signer would be the one who uploads reports.

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02:33:31.590 --> 02:33:50.829

Tiffany Circle: They're already signing the report, like, my chairman, for instance, is already signing the report as approved, but it should be allowed for me as the projects person to upload that report, because sometimes my chairman's not going to have enough time to sit there and upload reports to the grant portal. So that's one issue we've seen administratively.

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02:33:50.830 --> 02:33:59.619

Tiffany Circle: The other one is, reports. It seems I think we have, like, 3 reports we do, you know, annually throughout the year. If somehow we can just

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02:33:59.710 --> 02:34:19.479

Tiffany Circle: move it to one report, or some of the questions are a little bit redundant in the reports, so there's just there's just some issues that we I see here internally with the Colville Tribe, when we're just consistently doing reports, changing grant portals. It just becomes really, burdensome, I guess, to us to just stay on top of that.

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02:34:19.970 --> 02:34:20.960

Tiffany Circle: Thank you.

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02:34:22.110 --> 02:34:34.320

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Tiffany. Those are exactly the kind of comments that we're looking for on this specific topic. How have we made your life easier? Where have we made things harder? So if anyone else has comments on that, I would really appreciate that as well.

1101

02:34:38.230 --> 02:34:48.870

Maci Morin: Great. I have a couple of more hands here. I see Luke. Luke Strong-Cvetich is the next one. So, Luke, your line is unmuted.

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02:34:50.170 --> 02:34:51.449

Luke Strong-Cvetich: Can you hear me?

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02:34:51.780 --> 02:34:52.260

Margaret Gutierrez: Yes.

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02:34:52.260 --> 02:34:53.080

Maci Morin: Yes?

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02:34:54.930 --> 02:35:05.560

Luke Strong-Cvetich: Well, first, thank you for taking the time. My name's Luke Strong. I am the Planning Director for the Jamestown-S'Klallam Tribe in Washington State.

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02:35:05.710 --> 02:35:06.640

Luke Strong-Cvetich: I think

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02:35:06.690 --> 02:35:30.410

Luke Strong-Cvetich: One of the administrative barriers is, I think other people have mentioned it, but the turnaround on cures to existing applications. There was a week turnaround that you guys held through the holidays, and that didn't really seem to be a good faith effort to work cooperatively. A lot of times, offices are closed and folks go on vacation, especially

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02:35:30.470 --> 02:35:44.379

Luke Strong-Cvetich: busy Tribal leaders, and we do like to check in with the Tribal leaders prior to amending an application, and that week turnaround is unnecessary pressure on, on small Tribes like the Tribe I work for.

1109

02:35:46.320 --> 02:36:02.190

Luke Strong-Cvetich: Second, I am not sure, but my understanding is that NTIA has moved from the Department of Commerce to the National Institute of Standards and Technologies, and with that come new administrative requirements.

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02:36:02.190 --> 02:36:25.190

Luke Strong-Cvetich: Whenever new administrative requirements are imposed without clear guidance or consultation, they become an additional burden for Tribes. I'm not sure if there's any comment on NTIA moving from the Department of Commerce to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, but I haven't received much other than mention that that

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02:36:25.190 --> 02:36:34.409

Luke Strong-Cvetich: had or will happen. So, as transparent as you guys can be is helpful for us, and we try to do the same. Thank you.

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02:36:35.260 --> 02:36:41.439

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you so much for your comments. On the first topic for the turnaround time, is that through TBCP or through the BEAD program?

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02:36:42.690 --> 02:36:44.859

Luke Strong-Cvetich: That is through TBCP.

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02:36:45.040 --> 02:36:51.549

Margaret Gutierrez: Perfect, thank you, I appreciate that. And then on the second comment, yes, we did move from NOAA, which was under the Department of Commerce.

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02:36:51.560 --> 02:37:06.529

Margaret Gutierrez: to NIST, who is now the granting, the funding agency on our awards. So now we're aligned with the rest of the programs under NTIA, and aren't the standalone, who is working under NOAA,

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02:37:06.530 --> 02:37:29.139

Margaret Gutierrez: I'll say that, most of it was the amount of personnel available to work on our program, or the lack of amount of personnel available to work on our program. So we have officially moved over and are under NIST now, and are actually in conversations currently as to changes from NOAA to NIST and what those impacts are to the Tribes.

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02:37:29.140 --> 02:37:44.410

Margaret Gutierrez: And trying to ensure that we continue on the path that we've been that we've been on, as far as what forms you guys are using, what processes have been put in place, and not changing that, even though we've changed programs to limit the amount of administrative burden.

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02:37:46.700 --> 02:37:55.569

Luke Strong-Cvetich: Thank you, and thank you to the NTIA staff who've provided guidance and patiently helped applicants work through some of these cures, and

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02:37:55.700 --> 02:37:59.479

Luke Strong-Cvetich: An ongoing, an ongoing correspondence.

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02:38:00.280 --> 02:38:14.969

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Luke, you mentioned that one week was not sufficient time. I recognize you said that was, like, over, like, the holidays, but what period of time do you think is reasonable for a turnaround time for curing?

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02:38:15.810 --> 02:38:20.560

Luke Strong-Cvetich: Well, I'd kick the question back to you. What time of turnaround is reasonable over the holidays?

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02:38:20.560 --> 02:38:27.060

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Well, I hear you. Let's move the holidays out of it, right? If it's not during the holidays,

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02:38:27.460 --> 02:38:30.300

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: What would be a reasonable turnaround time?

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02:38:30.890 --> 02:38:36.700

Luke Strong-Cvetich: You know, I've met every one of those deadlines, and it hasn't been too much of an issue.

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02:38:36.700 --> 02:38:56.419

Luke Strong-Cvetich: But, I would say at least 2 weeks. Oftentimes, conferences last for a week, and if you have a Tribal leader who needs to sign off on an amended application, or at least be informed prior to submitting it, and they're out for a week, they come back to an inbox with a thousand emails in it, and

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02:38:56.420 --> 02:39:16.280

Luke Strong-Cvetich: This isn't the only, this isn't the only agency that is, going through a lot of changes. So, I think, I think now, more than ever, I would say 3 weeks, just given the uncertainty that we deal with from the federal government on a regular basis, much more now than, than ever before.

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02:39:16.280 --> 02:39:22.339

Luke Strong-Cvetich: So, to understand that this isn't what we're used to, and that we are doing our best to keep up.

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02:39:22.340 --> 02:39:35.209

Luke Strong-Cvetich: But I'm sure I'm not the only one in this room who has multiple, multiple pending awards that are requiring, cures, or revised budgets, or revised scopes of work.

1129

02:39:35.230 --> 02:39:49.689

Luke Strong-Cvetich: And, it's, it's, it's challenging, I would say, for the majority of people. I can only speak on behalf of the Tribe I work for, but, anecdotally, I've heard that many are in the same, are in the same situation.

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02:39:50.540 --> 02:39:51.720

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you.

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02:39:56.440 --> 02:40:02.940

Maci Morin: Great, thank you, Luke. Next, we will go to Frances Goli. Frances, you have been unmuted.

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02:40:03.390 --> 02:40:16.120

Frances Goli: Hi, thank you, Frances Goli, representing the Shoshone Bannock Tribes, the project manager on this. And one of the things I recognized is a few things, is that we had done some updates, but the

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02:40:16.120 --> 02:40:29.980

Frances Goli: Tribal council, sometimes it could be difficult, again, around turnaround time. Every council and leadership is on a different cadence, so sometimes getting some lead way on getting that turnaround for those signatures.

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02:40:29.980 --> 02:40:41.980

Frances Goli: The other thing that I had a big issue with, and I'm hoping that it gets fixed, is some of the Excel forms and templates that are provided by NTIA. The formulas that are already pre-built in

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02:40:42.010 --> 02:40:55.109

Frances Goli: if there is an error, it's cumbersome to get those financials to match. So that's one thing that I had some major difficulty with, is that once those pre-done formulas were done.

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02:40:55.290 --> 02:41:12.350

Frances Goli: if you made a mistake, it was difficult to get them back in, so hopefully to get some in you guys could provide some more information on that, or updates. Lastly, the streamlining the grants, so, like, in doing the FAQ, it was very difficult to try to find

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02:41:12.650 --> 02:41:15.990

Frances Goli: you know, FAQs on how to fix those. So

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02:41:16.060 --> 02:41:22.969

Frances Goli: Our grant officer provided guidance for uploading, so just some of the documentation and compliance.

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02:41:22.970 --> 02:41:38.539

Frances Goli: was difficult to find. You felt like you were spending a lot of time digging through documentation, should I find what you're looking for. So hopefully, maybe that could be fixed in the future around compliance, especially with ERA common zipping, it being our second

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02:41:39.410 --> 02:41:55.339

Frances Goli: portal to try to update. It doesn't provide guidance when it comes to those Excel templates. And then with the TBC guidelines, there hasn't been clear enough guidance on how to fix some of these issues that are already pre-done in the formulas. So, that was it.

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02:41:55.550 --> 02:41:56.530

Frances Goli: Thank you.

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02:42:02.190 --> 02:42:03.519

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thank you, Frances.

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02:42:06.000 --> 02:42:12.629

Maci Morin: Thank you. Next I see, Johnna Flynn. Johnna, you have been unmuted.

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02:42:15.450 --> 02:42:22.770

Johnna Flynn: I don't know if I can really speak with experience on this, because we have not received any funding towards this project yet.

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02:42:23.380 --> 02:42:24.220

Johnna Flynn: But

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02:42:24.400 --> 02:42:36.900

Johnna Flynn: I know just working with other grants, like the gentleman said earlier, having a little bit longer response time, because like he said, my, our chief, she may be gone a week.

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02:42:37.460 --> 02:42:43.979

Johnna Flynn: And we're told, unless it's on fire or bleeding, we don't contact anybody.

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02:42:44.820 --> 02:42:47.569

Johnna Flynn: So, there's times that I may go

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02:42:48.260 --> 02:42:51.560

Johnna Flynn: 8 or 10 days without being able to contact her.

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02:42:51.690 --> 02:42:52.840

Johnna Flynn: So,

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02:42:53.290 --> 02:43:02.199

Johnna Flynn: I have literally stood at her door waiting for her to come in in the mornings, just so I could contact her and say, hey, I need your input on this, or

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02:43:03.830 --> 02:43:10.130

Johnna Flynn: And paperwork, like everybody has been talking about, that's, that's a big thing.

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02:43:10.480 --> 02:43:24.449

Johnna Flynn: We are a small Tribe. I'm the only person in my department. I don't know if I would be the lead person over this, but to get the chief's signature on something is an act of Congress, literally.

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02:43:26.720 --> 02:43:45.919

Margaret Gutierrez: So, I'll say, just from my program's lens, that, half of us are enrolled Tribal members and have worked, on the other side of the table, so if you just send us an email and let us know what your situation is, we are generally very good about working with you guys and extending those timelines.

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02:43:46.000 --> 02:43:48.349

Margaret Gutierrez: If, if that is necessary.

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02:43:49.520 --> 02:43:50.670

Johnna Flynn: Okay, thank you.

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02:43:57.900 --> 02:44:04.479

Maci Morin: Alright, thank you, thank you, thank you all around. Next, we have Will Micklin. Will, you have been unmuted.

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02:44:08.320 --> 02:44:09.239

Will Micklin: Thank you.

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02:44:09.340 --> 02:44:16.580

Will Micklin: Just, A quick response here to reducing administrative burden.

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02:44:17.910 --> 02:44:25.080

Will Micklin: I think 30 days. You asked about, back-off time for responses, I think 30 days.

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02:44:25.440 --> 02:44:31.640

Will Micklin: at least for us, would do well. And, as some of you Who know me,

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02:44:32.320 --> 02:44:37.749

Will Micklin: may know, so I'm vice president for one of the largest Tribes in the country.

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02:44:38.460 --> 02:44:42.209

Will Micklin: And I'm CEO for one of the small,

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02:44:42.780 --> 02:44:47.499

Will Micklin: Smaller Tribes with a medium-sized reservation in the lower 48.

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02:44:47.960 --> 02:44:51.139

Will Micklin: So I see both ends of the spectrum.

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02:44:51.730 --> 02:45:08.510

Will Micklin: And administrative burden, is heaviest on, on turnaround times, on the expense of application and responses?

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02:45:09.200 --> 02:45:17.509

Will Micklin: You know, if it wasn't for the capital project fund that came out of the CARES Act and the

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02:45:18.360 --> 02:45:21.609

Will Micklin: IIJA, I think.

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02:45:21.860 --> 02:45:34.390

Will Micklin: Those, those congressional appropriations, In the last administration, Actually, it became Some of it came administration.

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02:45:34.550 --> 02:45:47.319

Will Micklin: Even before that, we wouldn't have any money, wouldn't have enough money to apply. The cost of application is significant because the cost of expertise is high.

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02:45:48.090 --> 02:45:56.800

Will Micklin: So, there is the real risk In non-award of just The benefit going to consultants.

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02:45:57.200 --> 02:46:08.019

Will Micklin: And, that's, that's very difficult. As to administrative costs, that's a real thing. The base for most Tribes, most

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02:46:08.120 --> 02:46:13.849

Will Micklin: All Tribes is steadily, has been steadily reduced over the last

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02:46:14.320 --> 02:46:21.030

Will Micklin: 15 years, and even with acceleration over the last 3 or 4 or 5 years.

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02:46:21.390 --> 02:46:25.199

Will Micklin: So the available funds that could be applied

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02:46:25.770 --> 02:46:37.239

Will Micklin: For these purposes, whether in, administration, application, engineering, etc.

1177

02:46:37.550 --> 02:46:44.019

Will Micklin: That is not covered by an award for an approved use is really scarce.

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02:46:44.700 --> 02:46:59.780

Will Micklin: And running low, particularly in 26, we don't even know what the allocations, appropriations are going to be, so our relied upon funding, support from our administration, whether it's from indirect costs or

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02:47:00.130 --> 02:47:05.480

Will Micklin: Other uses of discretionary funds, if available.

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02:47:05.690 --> 02:47:20.779

Will Micklin: is really unknown. It could be much lower than we've relied on in the past. So even if there were to be a grant fund where Tribes could apply, where they are in distress because they are short administrative support.

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02:47:20.920 --> 02:47:23.200

Will Micklin: Would be extremely helpful.

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02:47:23.680 --> 02:47:25.950

Will Micklin: So, thank you.

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02:47:32.630 --> 02:47:33.360
Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you.

1184

02:47:35.430 --> 02:47:47.539

Maci Morin: Well, Tiffany, I don't know if your hand is still up, from the previous time you spoke, but I will unmute you, and if you don't want to speak, you can raise or lower your hand.

1185

02:47:47.920 --> 02:48:03.660

Tiffany Circle: It's funny, because I should have put my hand down, but I do have a response again. So I would just like to comment that we'd be given a 30-day grace period, you know, when we have, our reports are late, just for signatures, things along those lines, when it comes to the Technical, Annual, and the Baseline report.

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02:48:03.910 --> 02:48:23.109

Tiffany Circle: I don't I can't remember what the date, the period is for when you actually get a notice about the late report from the funding agency, but if we could get a 30-day grace period just for the fact that these reports, as they sit right now, have to go through a very lengthy, I guess, review, not internally with the Tribe. You have to have your project people look at it.

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02:48:23.110 --> 02:48:37.419

Tiffany Circle: Your consultant is actually helping you put in information if you're using a consultant, your financial accounting is internally here reviewing it, and then you actually go to your chairman or whoever the signing authority is and get a signature, and sometimes that, that could take a while.

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02:48:37.420 --> 02:48:57.169

Tiffany Circle: to just get all of those parties within, you know, 20, 30 working days to get all of that compiled and make sure, you know, you put in a good report. So, I would say even if it's after the deadline, we still get almost a 30-day grace period, to still submit that without it being almost like a negative tick against us, in reporting, in the reporting realm of all of these funds.

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02:48:57.170 --> 02:48:58.100

Tiffany Circle: Thank you.

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02:48:58.550 --> 02:49:04.109

Margaret Gutierrez: Tiffany, too, one comment and then a question. Those notices that go out are not from us.

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02:49:04.110 --> 02:49:12.460

Margaret Gutierrez: They are automated and go out through the system, so I'm so sorry. We have already asked for them to stop or to be given a different timeline.

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02:49:12.460 --> 02:49:27.709

Margaret Gutierrez: With no luck, so I'll just apologize in advance for that. My second, comment or question, though, is do you have an opinion or, any advice or direction on how we can reduce that burden on you guys as far as the reporting goes?

1193

02:49:30.750 --> 02:49:42.470

Tiffany Circle: I would in my opinion, I would think you could just compile those 3 reports somehow, instead of having 3 different reports due within, like, 3 different time frames.

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02:49:42.630 --> 02:49:49.810

Tiffany Circle: So it almost feels like sometimes I'm doing a report, and I'll have to even sit here and ask my counterpart, some are like, did we just do this one?

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02:49:49.850 --> 02:50:05.589

Tiffany Circle: You know, because sometimes they look almost, you know, they're similar in nature, some of the questions, some of them are different, like, if you have use and adoption, like, I don't have that. I only have infrastructure funding. Luckily, you guys blacked that out, so I don't waste any time on that, but it's just some of these

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02:50:05.590 --> 02:50:19.020

Tiffany Circle: reports and the questions are almost similar in nature, especially as we're starting to get down when we're going to do our annual report, and we start to deploy to the home, that's information I'm going to be taking from field staff.

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02:50:19.020 --> 02:50:37.130

Tiffany Circle: and implementing into these reports, and that's going to be even lengthier, especially if I'm not, like, keeping up, like, here internally, because we have other jobs besides, like, this project here for the IT Tribal government realm. So when we start to put, like, where we're actually service dropping all of these,

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02:50:37.670 --> 02:50:57.339

Tiffany Circle: like, all of this infrastructure here on the call reservation, that's even gonna be more, I hate to use this word, but, like, burdensome to us to make sure that information is correct. I'm getting it from the people who are installing, so I just I just feel like somehow in there, we, we should be able to streamline these three documents almost into one.

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02:50:59.550 --> 02:51:01.349

Margaret Gutierrez: Okay, thank you, I appreciate that.

1200

02:51:03.340 --> 02:51:12.140

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Tiffany, I had a follow-up, too. So, you mentioned that you wanted a 30-day grace period. Are you saying an additional 30 days?

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02:51:12.640 --> 02:51:14.290

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: because currently.

1202

02:51:14.930 --> 02:51:24.250

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: with some of our programs, right, you have 30 days from the end of the period to submit the report. Are you saying an additional 30 days beyond that for a total of 60?

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02:51:24.460 --> 02:51:28.350

Tiffany Circle: Yeah, I think I feel like that that's a good time frame, because

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02:51:28.900 --> 02:51:44.880

Tiffany Circle: like I said, as we start to do service drops, these reports are going to become more complex, and it's going to be taking field information, making sure that it's input correctly, and that it's, you know, this is hundreds and hundreds of service drops that we're going to be doing.

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02:51:45.040 --> 02:51:53.599

Tiffany Circle: in these next few months for reports. So, just to have that 30 day grace period, like, say your report's due February 15th.

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02:51:53.830 --> 02:52:05.800

Tiffany Circle: and then maybe, you know, you're saying the portals, the portals who sends out the notices that by day 2, day 3, you're late on your report to the, authorized representative, it should be, like.

1207

02:52:05.850 --> 02:52:15.979

Tiffany Circle: could we get an extra 30 days? Like, should we be asking our FPO, can we get 30 days extra, and then we'll for sure have it uploaded by then? Just something along those lines.

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02:52:21.250 --> 02:52:22.510

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you.

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02:55:25.530 --> 02:55:29.600

Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, with that, Maci, it looks like we can go to the next topic.

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02:55:33.750 --> 02:55:34.420

Margaret Gutierrez: Oh, my God.

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02:55:34.420 --> 02:55:40.360

Maci Morin: I do have, sorry to interrupt, Boyd has raised his hand. Boyd, go ahead, sorry.

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02:55:40.780 --> 02:55:43.809

Boyd Cummings: Sorry about that. No, I was just gonna say, I do agree with the previous

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02:55:44.170 --> 02:55:48.249

Boyd Cummings: Speaker who talked about, the deadlines,

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02:55:48.350 --> 02:55:53.260

Boyd Cummings: But also, one of the I think one of the things that I, I appreciate most about

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02:55:53.680 --> 02:56:00.309

Boyd Cummings: all of you guys, is the fact that I've had the chance to talk to you at dinner at

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02:56:00.710 --> 02:56:11.820

Boyd Cummings: meetings and places like that, and I think it helped me a lot. And you've come here, before. That helped a lot, too. It probably wouldn't be a bad idea for the rest of us

1231

02:56:12.110 --> 02:56:21.729

Boyd Cummings: on our team, for instance, we have a lot of I didn't I couldn't come up with a better word than pedantic, but I was going to say our, accountants, we've got a new leadership team in place.

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02:56:22.150 --> 02:56:26.600

Boyd Cummings: Business committee, you know, we got a new chief, we have a new vice chief, we have a new treasurer.

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02:56:26.710 --> 02:56:32.330

Boyd Cummings: And, without getting too much into it, I don't want to say our project was about to be derailed, but

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02:56:32.620 --> 02:56:39.850

Boyd Cummings: you know, they tend to panic when they see the deadlines, and they think, oh my gosh, we can't be, you know, we can't be late. They've gotta

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02:56:39.950 --> 02:56:43.549

Boyd Cummings: Get this done, and with everything else going on with the current administration, they were

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02:56:43.750 --> 02:56:50.819

Boyd Cummings: really running around trying to make it to meetings, they were running down to the Choctaws to talk about IHS, they were, you know, it was kind of weird.

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02:56:51.180 --> 02:56:54.200

Boyd Cummings: For a minute, but I wish that the rest of our

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02:56:54.660 --> 02:57:06.940

Boyd Cummings: teams could get together with you guys more often, because in the past, I think that's one of the things that helped us a lot, was being able to, meet with you, and talk to you, and hear your opinion about stuff, and know that,

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02:57:07.170 --> 02:57:14.610

Boyd Cummings: You know, we're not going to get our hands slapped with a ruler, to use an old term, every time we're a day late on something.

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02:57:14.840 --> 02:57:18.299

Boyd Cummings: I think our accountants need to know that kind of thing, because they generally don't.

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02:57:18.790 --> 02:57:23.809

Boyd Cummings: Those people generally tend to see terms in only black and white, right?

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02:57:23.940 --> 02:57:25.699

Boyd Cummings: And so,

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02:57:26.320 --> 02:57:33.690

Boyd Cummings: But I do appreciate the time that you have spent with us in the past. I think that needs to continue, especially on the administrative side of things.

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02:57:34.360 --> 02:57:35.230

Boyd Cummings: That's it.

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02:57:37.060 --> 02:57:37.840

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, bye.

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02:57:42.070 --> 02:57:52.959

Margaret Gutierrez: All right, so next we'll turn to technology advancements. Recent advancements in LEO, or Low Earth Orbit Satellite and Fixed Wireless Broadband Technologies have expanded the range of connectivity options.

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02:57:52.960 --> 02:58:02.899

Margaret Gutierrez: available to Tribal communities. Sorry, it's been a long day, y'all. Particularly in areas where traditional terrestrial infrastructure may be difficult or cost prohibitive to deploy.

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02:58:03.030 --> 02:58:11.709

Margaret Gutierrez: As these technologies continue to evolve, NTIA is interested in understanding how they are being used in practice, and how they are impacting broadband connectivity across Indian Country.

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02:58:11.790 --> 02:58:21.849

Margaret Gutierrez: NTA recognizes that technology decisions are highly context-specific, and that Tribes are best positioned to assess which solutions are appropriate for their communities, geography, and long-term goals.

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02:58:21.850 --> 02:58:32.479

Margaret Gutierrez: With that in mind, we are seeking Tribal input on how advancements in LEO satellite and fixed wireless technologies have affected connectivity outcomes, including reliability, performance, affordability, and sustainability.

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02:58:32.480 --> 02:58:47.059

Margaret Gutierrez: We are also interested in whether additional or more up-to-date information on satellite and wireless technologies would be helpful in supporting Tribal decision-making and evaluation of broadband options. We welcome your experiences, observations, and recommendations, including both benefits and limitations.

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02:58:47.060 --> 02:59:03.100

Margaret Gutierrez: to help inform how NTIA can better support technology-informed decision-making moving forward. With that context, we'd like to pose these questions for the open discussion. First, how have recent advancements in LEO satellite and fixed wireless broadband technologies impacted broadband connectivity in Indian Country?

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02:59:03.100 --> 02:59:13.739

Margaret Gutierrez: And second, would additional information on the latest advancements and improvements in satellite and or wireless technologies assist Tribes in evaluating broadband technology options? And with that, we'll open the floor.

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02:59:14.980 --> 02:59:22.170

Maci Morin: Thank you, Margaret. Valerie Fast Horse, I saw your hand shoot up, first, so we will allow you to speak first.

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02:59:27.180 --> 02:59:46.969

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): Hi, this is Justin Hall. I'm actually one of Valerie's network administrators here in Idaho. I got a quick story for low Earth orbit. We had a customer recently who was a fiber customer of ours, and their house caught on fire, unfortunately, and they were required to move.

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02:59:47.050 --> 02:59:54.630

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): They moved to a location that was unserved by us, that we have applied for funding in the past

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02:59:54.750 --> 03:00:10.680

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): And, their only option was to go with, low Earth satellite, Starlink, specifically. They went out and got the kit, and got all signed up and stuff, and went home, and went to turn it on.

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03:00:10.700 --> 03:00:25.290

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): And they were told to call technical support. They called technical support, and were informed that the satellites in our area were overbooked, and it would be an additional \$1,000 a month to squeeze them in.

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03:00:26.030 --> 03:00:37.820

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): So, again, you know, these areas that are funding are crucial for Tribal Entities, you know, for not just Tribal members, but, you know, the communities as a whole.

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03:00:37.820 --> 03:00:46.199

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): You know, we've applied for funding in these areas previously, and unfortunately, the low Earth orbit guys got the funding.

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03:00:46.390 --> 03:00:51.999

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): And they're turning away the customers, or requiring them to pay more. That's real unfortunate.

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03:00:57.370 --> 03:00:58.340

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): And that's all.

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03:01:00.000 --> 03:01:01.670

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you very much for your comments.

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03:01:01.670 --> 03:01:02.360

Justin Hall(under Valerie Fast Horse): Yeah.

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03:01:04.220 --> 03:01:10.860

Maci Morin: Thank you, Justin. Next person will be Robert Griffin. Robert, you were able to speak.

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03:01:14.830 --> 03:01:17.449

Robert Griffin: Halito, this is Rob,

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03:01:18.200 --> 03:01:21.719

Robert Griffin: Yeah, so I thought, I think that's an interesting example.

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03:01:21.950 --> 03:01:30.409

Robert Griffin: For us, we, you know, have been working with the Oklahoma Broadband Office on a BEAD application.

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03:01:30.540 --> 03:01:41.589

Robert Griffin: And they reached out to us to ask for Tribal consent for an award of

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03:01:41.860 --> 03:01:53.370

Robert Griffin: quite a quite a bit of money, close to, I don't remember the exact dollar amount, but it was upwards of \$50 to \$70 million to award to a satellite company.

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03:01:53.700 --> 03:02:03.860

Robert Griffin: And, you know, we responded back that they had not requested any Tribal consent, they had not sent in the required form.

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03:02:03.970 --> 03:02:17.670

Robert Griffin: And if they would do so, we would review it, but they never did. And so I think, you know, this is all part, of a bigger technology shortcoming

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03:02:18.090 --> 03:02:29.469

Robert Griffin: Whereas, based on some of my earlier statements, the technology is not a scalable technology and has limitations. And

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03:02:29.740 --> 03:02:47.120

Robert Griffin: you know, it doesn't support any type of growth. So, once you have connectivity, and in the prior example, if you can get connectivity, then you're going to be limited in terms of the amount of bandwidth. And I know there

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03:02:47.120 --> 03:02:55.340

Robert Griffin: Are examples and case studies out there where it shows that there's good download speeds and good upload speeds.

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03:02:55.470 --> 03:03:11.900

Robert Griffin: But, you know, that's a variable, because every time you test those upload-download speeds, they will be different, and over the course of time, just like with any wireless technology, the more people that connect and start using it.

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03:03:12.630 --> 03:03:23.210

Robert Griffin: And, you know, your bandwidth speeds will get slower and slower over the course of time, where, you know, at some point now, I think what's even more

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03:03:23.280 --> 03:03:43.089

Robert Griffin: technology-driven on the satellite piece is that in fixed wireless, you have a tower that is stable and is stagnant. It stays in one place, and you may have to adjust towers and antennas and that kind of thing, and coverage. But with satellites, those can change at any time.

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03:03:43.100 --> 03:03:47.100

Robert Griffin: You know, without any type of notification.

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03:03:47.620 --> 03:03:59.169

Robert Griffin: There's no service level agreement in place, so the type of Entity that you would be able to connect to it, if it requires emergency services, healthcare.

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03:03:59.390 --> 03:04:17.130

Robert Griffin: you know, things that are very important in these rural areas, the reliability factor is extremely limited, and so I think, you know, there are many studies out there on this. This is not something that's new, I think it's just something that's being, you know, pitched out there by,

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03:04:17.260 --> 03:04:23.040

Robert Griffin: by people saying that this will cover these remote areas. Now, you've got to remember, I mean, I think that

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03:04:23.680 --> 03:04:39.330

Robert Griffin: the thing that we always forget, that if you connect somebody and then they can't get connected, you're just gonna leave that Entity stranded and abandoned. And in our case, if it's a Tribal nation, they're just abandoned, because I promise.

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03:04:39.330 --> 03:04:49.599

Robert Griffin: Nobody's gonna come back in 2, 3, 5 years and say, hey, let's go ahead and build fiber out here now that you don't have connectivity, or let's improve the satellite to get you better service.

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03:04:49.600 --> 03:04:59.549

Robert Griffin: it will just be gone, and, you know, that area will continue to receive little or no connectivity. So, those are things that are that are,

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03:04:59.580 --> 03:05:18.940

Robert Griffin: very well known, and I mean, it will always come back to a prioritization by putting more money into it, and we know our Tribal constituents don't have that kind of money to keep throwing at technology. And so, you know, just like anything else, if you had a car that was unreliable and it didn't work most of the time.

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03:05:18.980 --> 03:05:34.860

Robert Griffin: you would stop planning to take trips in your car. If your internet service doesn't work most of the time, then you'll stop using it, and you won't be reliant on it. So, I mean, these are technology things that are known. I'm not sure why

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03:05:35.160 --> 03:05:47.999

Robert Griffin: they keep coming up as the end-all, be-all to our broadband issues, because areas cannot grow with it, with satellite being the only option. You will have no growth.

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03:05:48.010 --> 03:05:58.909

Robert Griffin: The reliability is low. You can't hold anybody accountable, so if you provide service via satellites, then how do you hold anybody accountable for any of this?

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03:05:59.060 --> 03:06:08.040

Robert Griffin: It's just it's not even hardly a band-aid, it's just a stopgap until there's better options available. Yakoke.

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03:06:12.330 --> 03:06:13.220

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Rob.

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03:06:16.490 --> 03:06:25.169

Maci Morin: Right, next we have, Sharayah Lane, and Ernie will follow up, next. So, Sharayah, your line is unmuted.

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03:06:26.170 --> 03:06:37.399

Sharayah Lane: Thank you. I did touch on this before, but I'm hoping that, if it is possible to bring these comments back to NTIA, as a whole.

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03:06:37.430 --> 03:06:52.660

Sharayah Lane: I know that with the change in the BEAD program, that, you know, LEO technology was included, and the messaging around it has been around costs, and reducing costs, and that this is a lower cost option.

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03:06:52.740 --> 03:07:07.050

Sharayah Lane: And, I would just like to say that that is that is not the case. When you think about the longer-term costs, like, were brought up earlier in the call the longer-term costs of the equipment.

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03:07:07.050 --> 03:07:16.320

Sharayah Lane: And the longer-term costs around sustainability, that fiber, does always come out to be a lower cost in the long term.

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03:07:16.320 --> 03:07:26.190

Sharayah Lane: And when we're thinking about Tribal communities, that's the ways in which we are thinking, is, long-term generational,

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03:07:26.440 --> 03:07:39.500

Sharayah Lane: generate impact and the opportunities of this, and so, looking at the immediate cost of putting satellites up, it's just inaccurate. And

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03:07:39.500 --> 03:07:49.780

Sharayah Lane: I'm hoping that that will come around, and that understanding will, be able to take larger hold, with NTIA as a whole.

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03:07:49.780 --> 03:08:01.979

Sharayah Lane: And then thinking about the community costs, which we also talked about earlier, the opportunities that are missed, the opportunities that are, taken away from Tribes.

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03:08:01.980 --> 03:08:17.439

Sharayah Lane: Especially those that have been, put in a position to have to sort of be forced to choose LEOs, and the cost to our communities, and the opportunity for, again, our workforce, our Tribal members to

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03:08:17.440 --> 03:08:31.229

Sharayah Lane: emerge into this sector as a whole, and, the cost on our, internal capacity. So just really not wanting to see that,

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03:08:31.390 --> 03:08:40.400

Sharayah Lane: being overlooked lightly at this moment in time. This is again, long-term way of looking at

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03:08:40.400 --> 03:08:52.180

Sharayah Lane: our communities and what is possible right now. And so, when we're in a moment like that, we don't want to look at just choosing the cheapest option that can be done the quickest.

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03:08:52.260 --> 03:09:06.259

Sharayah Lane: I'm also wanting to note that there is only one real provider in the space now, but we know that there will be other LEO providers entering the space in the near future, which will also put

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03:09:06.260 --> 03:09:12.390

Sharayah Lane: More of a strain on this area, if we're not clear about it from the onset.

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03:09:12.390 --> 03:09:19.839

Sharayah Lane: So, you know, just having Starlink is one thing, but Kiper and others, when they are up and running.

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03:09:19.840 --> 03:09:32.719

Sharayah Lane: There'll be more, sort of, lobbying, more competition in the space, and more of a push toward LEO, and so if there are ways to, to set some things in stone now, and to

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03:09:32.720 --> 03:09:52.180

Sharayah Lane: you know, it's been said so many times on this call, of where, Tribes are with and Tribally specific, you know, this may not be the case for other rural communities, but that's one of the really unique factors of Tribes is, you know, looking at that ownership and management.

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03:09:52.180 --> 03:10:02.399

Sharayah Lane: Of networks, and again, the people power, the investment in our communities and our economies that will happen, as the result of,

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03:10:02.400 --> 03:10:03.150

Sharayah Lane: not

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03:10:03.150 --> 03:10:26.220

Sharayah Lane: being forced to use, LEO satellite, and to have that initial investment on the front end. So while these technologies are emerging, and they're new, and a little cheaper, and maybe more enticing, they haven't proven, their long-term sustainability. They don't have the track record, and they haven't been able to measure up yet.

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03:10:26.220 --> 03:10:36.370

Sharayah Lane: If there are technologies in the future that may become available, that's great, but we're not I don't think that we're there yet. I would also add,

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03:10:36.410 --> 03:10:40.800

Sharayah Lane: That there may be emerging technologies that

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03:10:41.120 --> 03:10:54.090

Sharayah Lane: still enable Tribes to maintain ownership and management of their networks. One example of that, and this is not a plug for them in any way, but one example of that is the, Project Taara

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03:10:54.110 --> 03:11:01.530

Sharayah Lane: that, rolled out in the U.S. that's providing hardware that, transmits data

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03:11:01.530 --> 03:11:14.290

Sharayah Lane: Over beams of light that kind of get to some of the geography issues that Tribes are facing, but at the end of the day, the Tribes have the option to own that hardware, and it's providing a tool

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03:11:14.290 --> 03:11:24.600

Sharayah Lane: But, the ownership and management stays within the Tribe, and the Tribe is still in a position to exercise, sovereignty. So that was all. Thank you.

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03:11:29.350 --> 03:11:30.780

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you for your comments.

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03:11:32.970 --> 03:11:42.470

Maci Morin: Thank you. Ernie, I saw that you lowered your hand, so if you'd still like to speak, please, raise your hand back up. Otherwise, we will move on to the next person.

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03:11:43.460 --> 03:11:46.710

Maci Morin: Alright, there you are, thank you, and you are unmuted.

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03:11:47.530 --> 03:11:48.570

Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you, Maci.

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03:11:49.190 --> 03:11:57.580

Ernie Rasmussen: I want to begin with the opening video in which Assistant Secretary Roth mentioned

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03:11:57.740 --> 03:12:01.140

Ernie Rasmussen: The deployment of infrastructure that would have the highest impact.

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03:12:01.700 --> 03:12:11.019

Ernie Rasmussen: And again, LEO is the exact opposite of that. It is the lowest impact solution to this challenge.

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03:12:11.230 --> 03:12:14.700

Ernie Rasmussen: It, again, the, it is not

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03:12:14.990 --> 03:12:25.130

Ernie Rasmussen: It does not have that community-wide multiplier, force multiplier, economic impact That the other technologies provide.

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03:12:25.500 --> 03:12:42.069

Ernie Rasmussen: There's also limitations. As much as we want to talk about technology advancements, the limitations to LEO are not something that we're going to be able to overcome. Physics simply will not allow for LEO to broad to carry

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03:12:42.210 --> 03:12:55.259

Ernie Rasmussen: the amount of data that fiber will. We don't know the limitations of fiber yet. We've not yet discovered what those are. We're limited at this point by the electronics on each end of the fiber.

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03:12:55.540 --> 03:13:01.489

Ernie Rasmussen: And we know that That fiber can greatly outperform

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03:13:01.830 --> 03:13:05.480

Ernie Rasmussen: Anything on the LEO scale, or even on the wireless scale.

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03:13:05.960 --> 03:13:12.240

Ernie Rasmussen: So lowest impact solution to this challenge is LEO.

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03:13:12.480 --> 03:13:17.559

Ernie Rasmussen: When we start looking at wireless technologies.

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03:13:17.930 --> 03:13:28.359

Ernie Rasmussen: We know the success of the Tribal priority window to give 2.5 to Tribes has been a game changer for many Tribes. It was

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03:13:28.500 --> 03:13:35.010

Ernie Rasmussen: the quickest way for Tribes to respond to the pandemic.

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03:13:35.300 --> 03:13:39.210

Ernie Rasmussen: And being able to provide for, the

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03:13:39.510 --> 03:13:43.649

Ernie Rasmussen: The communication needs, the broadband needs of their communities.

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03:13:44.000 --> 03:13:51.070

Ernie Rasmussen: I like to share the story of a young lady who works for the Colville Tribes.

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03:13:51.180 --> 03:13:55.630

Ernie Rasmussen: Who utilized the 2.5 system to

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03:13:55.980 --> 03:14:03.820

Ernie Rasmussen: Not only while she was living in low-income housing, As a single mother, She received her associate's degree.

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03:14:04.370 --> 03:14:09.900

Ernie Rasmussen: Landed a job, within the Colville tribe government, continued

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03:14:10.040 --> 03:14:14.590

Ernie Rasmussen: Through the utilization of this same technology, the 2.5 wireless technology.

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03:14:14.700 --> 03:14:18.879

Ernie Rasmussen: To get her bachelor's degree, and now she's actually pursuing a master's degree.

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03:14:19.860 --> 03:14:23.670

Ernie Rasmussen: This is, you know, again, wireless provided her that.

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03:14:23.810 --> 03:14:39.730

Ernie Rasmussen: And it was not just the availability of wireless, but the workforce that was able to prop up the wireless to make it reliable enough for her to actually be able to achieve this, to succeed in a manner that she had only dreamed of before.

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03:14:41.770 --> 03:14:47.670

Ernie Rasmussen: So again, when we talk about the technological advancement of wireless.

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03:14:47.840 --> 03:14:55.589

Ernie Rasmussen: We're gonna be limited by physics, but we're also finding ourselves limited by policy.

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03:14:56.010 --> 03:15:02.260

Ernie Rasmussen: And on a government-to-government level, Again, being able to find

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03:15:02.380 --> 03:15:05.970

Ernie Rasmussen: More opportunities for Tribal priority windows to access

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03:15:06.320 --> 03:15:12.120

Ernie Rasmussen: Larger amounts of spectrum. Spectrum that has the ability to carry greater and greater amounts of bandwidth.

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03:15:12.270 --> 03:15:14.020

Ernie Rasmussen: It's gonna be a necessity.

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03:15:14.210 --> 03:15:19.390

Ernie Rasmussen: And then, of course, again, this technology advancements piece.

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03:15:19.630 --> 03:15:28.180

Ernie Rasmussen: on this on this question, I think you cannot, as a third bullet point, You cannot overlook

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03:15:28.970 --> 03:15:33.460

Ernie Rasmussen: The advancements that Fiber will bring,

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03:15:33.620 --> 03:15:47.389

Ernie Rasmussen: And the opportunity for fiber to transform communities in a manner that and it's not just at the household level, but on a community scale, with new jobs, again, new industries, and unlocking an entire

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03:15:47.540 --> 03:15:50.999

Ernie Rasmussen: sector within communities that was never there before.

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03:15:51.120 --> 03:16:00.859

Ernie Rasmussen: And that's just, again, LEO does not provide for that. Wireless does to a level, but not to the level of fiber. So, with that, I'll stop. Thanks.

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03:16:03.540 --> 03:16:04.519

Margaret Gutierrez: Thank you, Ernie.

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03:16:06.400 --> 03:16:14.939

Maci Morin: Thanks, Ernie. Next, we will go to Frances, and then we will, go next to Rob. So, Frances, you are unmuted.

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03:16:15.910 --> 03:16:22.639

Frances Goli: Hi, this is Frances Goli with the Shoshone Bannock Tribes, and I wanted to provide comment on the fixed wireless

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03:16:22.910 --> 03:16:38.409

Frances Goli: technologies. So, one of the things is that you will first have to have Spectrum availability. I'll piggyback, is that when the 2.5 became a Tribal priority window, it provided lots of opportunities. However, there were Tribes

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03:16:38.410 --> 03:16:46.519

Frances Goli: That were left out, such as mine, but also unlicensed Spectrum, so it is more congested, less reliable.

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03:16:46.520 --> 03:17:05.769

Frances Goli: And in the future, the cost and licensing there are major cost and licensing barriers, so Spectrum licenses are extremely expensive and complex to obtain, so we have to provide with large providers like AT&T and other wireless providers, making it difficult to even serve our Tribal lands.

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03:17:05.770 --> 03:17:07.700

Frances Goli: The other one is

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03:17:07.770 --> 03:17:23.179

Frances Goli: Tribal nations don't often have a large bucket of money to put towards Spectrum. So, to be competitive in this arena, and for scalability and future licensing opportunities. So, the last thing was that

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03:17:23.240 --> 03:17:39.350

Frances Goli: the FCC 2.5 Tribal Priority Window was wonderful for the Tribes that received it, so we would I would love to see additional support and collaboration with the FCC when it comes to deploying wireless, fixed wireless, on Tribal lands.

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03:17:39.350 --> 03:17:47.699

Frances Goli: I.e, another Tribal priority window to deploy fixed wireless within our Tribal lands. So, those are my comments on that.

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03:17:47.730 --> 03:17:48.530

Frances Goli: Thank you.

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03:17:54.350 --> 03:18:05.369

Maci Morin: Thank you, Frances. I saw that Rob lowered his hand, so that might have been a stale hand, but, last call for any comments on Topic 5 before we move on to the next one.

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03:18:07.010 --> 03:18:11.620

Maci Morin: I see Boyd. Boyd, you are unmuted.

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03:18:12.680 --> 03:18:16.470

Boyd Cummings: Just a real quick statement. When we when COVID happened, we spent

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03:18:16.590 --> 03:18:28.659

Boyd Cummings: about \$750,000 a year for 2 years for fixed wireless, just and that was with a major carrier. I just remember it was a godsend for our students and our children in schools and stuff.

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03:18:28.810 --> 03:18:32.030

Boyd Cummings: But it was kind of crazy expensive.

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03:18:32.690 --> 03:18:35.640

Boyd Cummings: Anyway, that's all I got to say about that. It was a lot.

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03:18:40.560 --> 03:18:41.950

Maci Morin: Oh, thank you so much.

1376

03:18:42.840 --> 03:18:48.380

Maci Morin: Alright, seeing no other hands, I will pass it back to the program team for Topic 6.

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03:18:50.810 --> 03:18:55.570

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you. We'll now turn to broadband adoption challenges.

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03:18:55.680 --> 03:19:03.620

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: NTIA recognizes that access to broadband infrastructure alone does not always result in meaningful connectivity.

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03:19:03.870 --> 03:19:10.030

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Adoption is influenced by a range of factors that can vary significantly across Tribal communities.

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03:19:10.520 --> 03:19:24.790

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Understanding these barriers is critical to shaping programs like TBCP and the Native Entities Grant Programs in ways that effectively support Tribes in achieving sustained and meaningful broadband use.

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03:19:25.150 --> 03:19:33.520

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: With this topic, NTIA is seeking Tribal input on the challenges affecting broadband adoption on Tribal lands.

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03:19:33.680 --> 03:19:37.549

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: These may include factors such as affordability.

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03:19:37.720 --> 03:19:42.809

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: availability of devices, digital skills and training.

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03:19:43.000 --> 03:19:48.800

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Cultural relevance, trust, or other community-specific considerations.

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03:19:49.330 --> 03:20:05.939

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: NTIA is particularly interested in hearing where adoption challenges persist, even when infrastructure is available, and what strategies or support may help address those gaps. With that context, we pose this question for open discussion.

1386

03:20:06.030 --> 03:20:11.549

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: What challenges exist with respect to broadband adoption on Tribal lands?

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03:20:35.940 --> 03:20:40.220

Maci Morin: Alright, Boyd, you are Unmuted.

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03:20:41.460 --> 03:20:41.873

Boyd Cummings: I said,

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03:20:42.730 --> 03:20:56.820

Boyd Cummings: we might be a little bit different in how we've approached this problem of ours, but I would say our biggest problem is still middle mile. Most of Central Oklahoma is all middle mile, and that becomes the problem.

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03:20:59.250 --> 03:21:04.019

Boyd Cummings: Don't know how we're going to solve that problem, but it becomes a problem. That's really all I have to say.

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03:21:06.520 --> 03:21:17.969

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: In areas where, Boyd, you have access to the internet, and folks have access, are you experiencing any challenges with people meaningfully using the internet?

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03:21:18.230 --> 03:21:23.079

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Challenges with access to devices, digital skills training?

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03:21:23.770 --> 03:21:27.330

Boyd Cummings: All of that, yes.

1394

03:21:28.130 --> 03:21:34.079

Boyd Cummings: We had a class with some of our elders, and one of the things we had to do, this'll sound strange, but one of the

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03:21:34.490 --> 03:21:40.370

Boyd Cummings: The thing that seemed to be most problematic for our elders is how to hold a mouse, or how to use a mouse.

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03:21:40.480 --> 03:21:44.809

Boyd Cummings: And so we spent a couple of days, literally, on how to use a mouse. It was, so

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03:21:44.960 --> 03:21:50.629

Boyd Cummings: Yeah, sometimes it's just people not never having access to technology before.

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03:21:50.790 --> 03:21:53.959

Boyd Cummings: Don't know what it's for, don't know why they need it,

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03:21:54.130 --> 03:22:02.629

Boyd Cummings: They're slowly coming around, and they think that they need it, especially among our elders and some of our lower-income places, but

1400

03:22:02.750 --> 03:22:05.830

Boyd Cummings: the ones that have access to it using it.

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03:22:06.060 --> 03:22:11.120

Boyd Cummings: I would say that's probably one of our larger challenges.

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03:22:15.260 --> 03:22:16.270

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thanks, Boyd.

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03:22:18.050 --> 03:22:30.869

Maci Morin: Yes, thank you, Boyd. I will never take for granted, not having to think about how to hold my mouse again, that's a nice story. Next, it will be Ernie. Ernie, you are able to speak now.

1404

03:22:33.390 --> 03:22:35.849

Ernie Rasmussen: Let's see, this is,

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03:22:36.340 --> 03:22:42.420

Ernie Rasmussen: you know, I'm thinking about, again, remote, high-cost reservation networks.

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03:22:42.780 --> 03:22:52.519

Ernie Rasmussen: That rely on upstream interconnections, and the costs, the cascading costs that continues to come downstream.

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03:22:52.750 --> 03:22:57.539

Ernie Rasmussen: And eventually land, on a Tribal provider.

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03:22:58.120 --> 03:23:02.789

Ernie Rasmussen: And those costs, so we start to run into affordability challenges.

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03:23:02.970 --> 03:23:12.620

Ernie Rasmussen: Being able to offer that service in an affordable manner, and yet be able to pay the price for interconnection that has been passed down from

1410

03:23:12.830 --> 03:23:15.060

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, multiple upstream interconnects.

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03:23:15.340 --> 03:23:24.439

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, you know, the challenge of affordability becomes one that we're concerned about.

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03:23:24.700 --> 03:23:27.039

Ernie Rasmussen: And especially in light of that.

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03:23:27.270 --> 03:23:34.310

Ernie Rasmussen: And then, of course, you know, the chronic economic distress that we see in Tribal communities.

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03:23:34.420 --> 03:23:38.170

Ernie Rasmussen: Some of the lack of the

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03:23:38.490 --> 03:23:49.420

Ernie Rasmussen: support for maintenance and operations in federal programs, in high-cost areas. I know there's some legislation now that's trying to address that, but,

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03:23:50.440 --> 03:23:56.440

Ernie Rasmussen: And then there's another piece on this in terms of adoption, and when you say meaningful.

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03:23:56.620 --> 03:24:00.390

Ernie Rasmussen: I know, there's a lot of subjectivity to that.

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03:24:00.640 --> 03:24:02.959

Ernie Rasmussen: A lot of question about what does that mean.

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03:24:03.060 --> 03:24:04.849

Ernie Rasmussen: So, meaningful adoption.

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03:24:05.130 --> 03:24:08.670

Ernie Rasmussen: And when we consider the uniqueness of Tribal communities.

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03:24:09.050 --> 03:24:14.730

Ernie Rasmussen: And there was, recently, there was an article that was, I believe, in The Atlantic just last week.

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03:24:14.950 --> 03:24:18.690

Ernie Rasmussen: That spoke to the challenge of elders

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03:24:19.300 --> 03:24:23.039

Ernie Rasmussen: Becoming overly dependent on devices.

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03:24:23.310 --> 03:24:26.959

Ernie Rasmussen: In many ways, addicted to devices.

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03:24:27.120 --> 03:24:36.560

Ernie Rasmussen: And that it's not necessarily youth that are they're finding it to be, the big challenge to interrupt their

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03:24:36.940 --> 03:24:39.810

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, their time with their device, it's elders.

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03:24:40.190 --> 03:24:45.020

Ernie Rasmussen: And I said, even when I was in a previous position.

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03:24:45.520 --> 03:24:48.770

Ernie Rasmussen: I was concerned about working in a

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03:24:49.140 --> 03:24:51.449

Ernie Rasmussen: In an industry that is going to

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03:24:51.770 --> 03:24:56.830

Ernie Rasmussen: Result in an erosion of the family structure.

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03:24:57.210 --> 03:25:06.489

Ernie Rasmussen: That when a grandma is sitting on the couch, she curses the day the internet showed up in her house, because we don't even talk to each other anymore.

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03:25:06.930 --> 03:25:16.730

Ernie Rasmussen: And now we're hearing that it's, you know, maybe not grandma's not necessarily going to be cursing it, she's going to be a part of that that challenge. So as a Tribal provider

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03:25:17.070 --> 03:25:18.960

Ernie Rasmussen: what is our responsibility?

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03:25:19.600 --> 03:25:25.810

Ernie Rasmussen: to working in that, as we had worked to, you know, responsibly.

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03:25:25.930 --> 03:25:30.790

Ernie Rasmussen: deploy Broadband into these communities, into our communities.

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03:25:32.030 --> 03:25:33.139

Ernie Rasmussen: How do we

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03:25:33.560 --> 03:25:42.279

Ernie Rasmussen: provide them the awareness, the skills, the understanding of the dangers, the pitfalls, the perils of adoption into their home.

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03:25:42.480 --> 03:25:49.720

Ernie Rasmussen: How do we work alongside them so that we have cultural responsibility, cultural resilience.

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03:25:50.030 --> 03:25:58.100

Ernie Rasmussen: And we avoid just dropping a service into their lap and letting them figure it out and fall

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03:25:58.380 --> 03:26:08.010

Ernie Rasmussen: Victim to a lot of these challenges of a new tool in their home that, again, requires some responsibility.

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03:26:08.940 --> 03:26:10.959

Ernie Rasmussen: I don't see that happening with

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03:26:11.610 --> 03:26:17.799

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, LEO. Again, this is another mark against a LEO solution

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03:26:17.960 --> 03:26:20.550

Ernie Rasmussen: for Indian Country.

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03:26:20.760 --> 03:26:30.439

Ernie Rasmussen: There is no local ownership, no stakeholder involvement in the development of the types of programs

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03:26:30.580 --> 03:26:36.289

Ernie Rasmussen: That, you know, are necessary to avoid these, these, these pitfalls.

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03:26:37.120 --> 03:26:43.020

Ernie Rasmussen: There's some other things that, you know, when we start talking about meaningful connectivity,

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03:26:43.670 --> 03:26:49.770

Ernie Rasmussen: Broadband is going to serve as an economic, siphon.

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03:26:49.890 --> 03:26:53.279

Ernie Rasmussen: We already see it with Amazon, with,

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03:26:53.670 --> 03:27:00.569

Ernie Rasmussen: the ability to just make purchases, you know, with a quick swipe of the phone and a, you know, and a touch of the thumb.

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03:27:01.030 --> 03:27:10.820

Ernie Rasmussen: we avoid going to the local grocery store, we avoid going to a local hardware store, we avoid going to you know, we don't have to do that anymore. And so it becomes this this

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03:27:11.200 --> 03:27:15.019

Ernie Rasmussen: extractive force to our local economy.

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03:27:15.280 --> 03:27:20.629

Ernie Rasmussen: And I worry, again, that some of these adoption challenges that we're not even we're not thinking about

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03:27:21.080 --> 03:27:33.240

Ernie Rasmussen: some of the other community entities that are going to be impacted by that, such as healthcare, the small businesses, and so how can we actually work with those Entities

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03:27:33.340 --> 03:27:39.890

Ernie Rasmussen: To, again, Skill them up so that there's a level of friction

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03:27:40.260 --> 03:27:44.620

Ernie Rasmussen: Between the household and that

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03:27:45.120 --> 03:27:55.060

Ernie Rasmussen: urban center where these dollars are gonna land, in another place, just because people are now accessing telehealth

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03:27:55.170 --> 03:28:07.690

Ernie Rasmussen: That, the, you know, tele-shopping, whatever it is, tele-education, and it's, again, it's they're not taking advantage of or accessing the local resources. And so

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03:28:08.030 --> 03:28:16.620

Ernie Rasmussen: what really caught my mind one time was when I saw a online courses for

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03:28:16.870 --> 03:28:20.140

Ernie Rasmussen: telehealth, administration.

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03:28:20.600 --> 03:28:24.720

Ernie Rasmussen: And there were a number of courses available through Stanford University.

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03:28:24.980 --> 03:28:29.480

Ernie Rasmussen: And it made me think, is our local IHS facility plugging into this?

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03:28:29.780 --> 03:28:32.100

Ernie Rasmussen: Are they learning to understand, you know, like

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03:28:32.330 --> 03:28:35.510

Ernie Rasmussen: the challenge of what's coming with

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03:28:35.710 --> 03:28:43.089

Ernie Rasmussen: a new infrastructure and a new service that's going to be in their community, and are they going to be able to survive? Are they going to be able to

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03:28:43.190 --> 03:28:46.310

Ernie Rasmussen: Have access to the funding that's going to provide them

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03:28:46.480 --> 03:28:49.689

Ernie Rasmussen: the most resources to provide for the community's needs.

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03:28:50.070 --> 03:28:52.999

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, and then when you think about all the other

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03:28:53.640 --> 03:29:00.550

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, whether it's education in a local school district, local community college, a community college extension.

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03:29:00.690 --> 03:29:17.100

Ernie Rasmussen: Are they equipped to, again, be able to provide those services at the local level on a telebasis. So those are some of the, again, meaningful connectivity is very subjective, and it's very broad, and that's those are some of the thoughts that come to mind.

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03:29:17.260 --> 03:29:18.300

Ernie Rasmussen: So, thank you.

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03:29:19.840 --> 03:29:20.880

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thanks, Ernie.

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03:29:26.230 --> 03:29:34.010

Maci Morin: Thank you, Ernie. The next person will be Jason Hall, followed by, Sharayah. So, Jason

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03:29:34.230 --> 03:29:40.100

Maci Morin: Your line is unmuted. Please introduce yourself with your title and organization before your comment. Thanks.

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03:29:42.460 --> 03:29:48.939

Jason Hall: Hello, my name's Jason Hall, Tribal Broadband Project Manager with Mohawk Networks on the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe.

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03:29:49.690 --> 03:29:54.970

Jason Hall: We are a broadband service provider, fiber to the home.

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03:29:55.670 --> 03:30:02.470

Jason Hall: been operating for, since 2011. Well

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03:30:02.730 --> 03:30:05.380

Jason Hall: Project Ben 2000, been operating since

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03:30:05.620 --> 03:30:06.450

Jason Hall: 2015.

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03:30:09.110 --> 03:30:14.059

Jason Hall: Some of the Broadband adoption challenges,

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03:30:14.330 --> 03:30:19.100

Jason Hall: exactly what Ernie was stating, we are living,

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03:30:20.000 --> 03:30:36.249

Jason Hall: Because we've been, operating our network now for a number of years, we are now in the process of, you know, replacing equipment, and this is a big burden strain on networks as well. The sustainability aspect.

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03:30:36.590 --> 03:30:40.480

Jason Hall: Up doing that, and you know,

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03:30:40.970 --> 03:30:51.680

Jason Hall: it's great that we're at this point. You are gonna have those, additional costs in the future, and that does limit, you know, resources we can put towards other things.

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03:30:51.900 --> 03:31:02.530

Jason Hall: Having technical resources on our, on our reservation is a challenge as well. So having the people to actually train on,

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03:31:03.110 --> 03:31:07.479

Jason Hall: you know, broadband things is, limited.

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03:31:07.890 --> 03:31:15.269

Jason Hall: Because a lot of our technical resources goes towards the maintenance of our broadband, operations, and

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03:31:15.580 --> 03:31:21.780

Jason Hall: you know, the Rolling out the equipment, installing the equipment, replacing the equipment,

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03:31:22.280 --> 03:31:30.509

Jason Hall: handling our NOC operations, all this stuff. So, you know, that takes a lot of resources and, people and effort.

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03:31:31.270 --> 03:31:37.870

Jason Hall: Having, having additional people trained in doing broadband adoption,

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03:31:38.110 --> 03:31:46.460

Jason Hall: skills, is tough, you know, tough with the number of people available to do it.

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03:31:47.800 --> 03:31:56.720

Jason Hall: There is the high cost of bringing the internet to our land is always a burden.

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03:31:56.890 --> 03:32:02.290

Jason Hall: We have to rely on, other, middle-mile carrier, and

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03:32:02.480 --> 03:32:14.149

Jason Hall: our content, which comes from, like, you know, 3 hours south of us. And that's you don't just rely on one. You have to rely on a couple if you want to, you know, redundancy in your network and a resilient network.

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03:32:14.290 --> 03:32:20.320

Jason Hall: So that, you know, that cost of getting the internet even to us.

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03:32:20.770 --> 03:32:24.200

Jason Hall: You know, is a barrier as well to things, and

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03:32:24.370 --> 03:32:30.199

Jason Hall: With a lot of these new programs, they have, limits, or they're trying to,

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03:32:31.230 --> 03:32:36.910

Jason Hall: Control the cost of, what you can charge your

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03:32:37.670 --> 03:32:43.720

Jason Hall: residents, even if you're gonna charge them to, you know, for their internet, so that that becomes a

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03:32:44.000 --> 03:32:47.909

Jason Hall: Another limitation or restriction that, you know, doesn't help.

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03:32:50.390 --> 03:32:56.230

Jason Hall: I think they were also everything Ernie was saying, you know, we have lived it in one form or another, for sure.

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03:32:57.510 --> 03:32:58.370

Jason Hall: Thank you.

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03:33:00.610 --> 03:33:01.909

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thank you, Jason.

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03:33:04.180 --> 03:33:09.509

Maci Morin: Jason, next to Sharayah. Sharayah, you are unmuted.

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03:33:10.780 --> 03:33:22.759

Sharayah Lane: Okay, thank you. Just really quickly, one of the things to sort of point out or note is that while there have been, digital equity

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03:33:22.760 --> 03:33:32.470

Sharayah Lane: programs focused on adoption and use, that have been rolled out through many partner organizations. We haven't seen

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03:33:32.550 --> 03:33:41.720

Sharayah Lane: a program like this being run by the Tribe. And I've seen, within my own community some of the,

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03:33:42.220 --> 03:33:58.949

Sharayah Lane: challenges that can come with working with an outside partner, and so the opportunity to have an adoption and use program that is Tribally run, I think, would be a lot more, impactful and successful.

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03:33:58.980 --> 03:34:18.390

Sharayah Lane: However, thinking about the different factors that would go into, you know, train-the-trainer models or things like that, again, preparing our community members to have this knowledge and these resources to share, would be step one. And,

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03:34:19.060 --> 03:34:36.040

Sharayah Lane: echoing also what Ernie said, that's what I hear a lot of is, you know, what are we doing to ensure the, information going to our people, education

around safety? There are some pretty horrible statistics around what comes along with the internet.

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03:34:36.070 --> 03:34:59.780

Sharayah Lane: And, so making sure that we're inclusive of that in the efforts. And, also access to devices. So, you know, I know even back in the day, I didn't get a cell phone or a computer until much, much later than a lot of other people I knew, you know, being on the reservation.

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03:34:59.780 --> 03:35:05.529

Sharayah Lane: And, you know, even today, a lot of people, their only means of access is a cell phone.

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03:35:05.530 --> 03:35:15.320

Sharayah Lane: And we know that that can cause limitations in a number of ways. So, I mean, there's a real opportunity here, again, sort of being a little later to the table

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03:35:15.320 --> 03:35:22.899

Sharayah Lane: to be very thoughtful and intentional about how we engage with this new resource, and

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03:35:22.900 --> 03:35:38.200

Sharayah Lane: You know, really wanting to maximize the opportunities for Tribal members, whether it's, you know, learning more about e-commerce, or telehealth, or the different ways to really use this internet as a tool.

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03:35:38.200 --> 03:35:46.449

Sharayah Lane: As the tool that it can be, and giving people the information and resources to be able to really maximize that. So, thank you.

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03:35:52.760 --> 03:36:09.339

Maci Morin: Thank you very much. I saw Valerie's hand up, or maybe it's Justin under Valerie's account, but, lower their hand, so if you all want to speak, please raise your hand back up, otherwise we'll move to the next person. All right, great! You all are unmuted.

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03:36:14.780 --> 03:36:15.550

Valerie Fast Horse: Me first?

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03:36:17.380 --> 03:36:18.490

Valerie Fast Horse: Hello? Yes, ma'am.

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03:36:18.670 --> 03:36:19.310

Maci Morin: Yes.

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03:36:19.550 --> 03:36:20.660

Maci Morin: We can hear ya.

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03:36:20.940 --> 03:36:26.510

Valerie Fast Horse: Thank you. Yeah, I just wanted to add on to, you know, I agree with

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03:36:27.050 --> 03:36:37.609

Valerie Fast Horse: Ernie's remarks about being a responsible service provider and, you know, having, again, the boots on the ground, the people who are here who can, you know, provide those warnings,

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03:36:38.560 --> 03:36:41.920

Valerie Fast Horse: It reminded me of the movie, The Gods Must Be Crazy. Have you guys seen that?

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03:36:45.950 --> 03:36:46.880

Maci Morin: I have not.

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03:36:47.230 --> 03:36:55.049

Valerie Fast Horse: Oh, well, this Tribe, this ancient Tribe discovers a Coke bottle, and they find all kinds of cool uses for it, rolling pins, and this and that

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03:36:55.290 --> 03:37:06.290

Valerie Fast Horse: and it was a cool device, it was a Coke bottle dropped in the middle of some jungle. Anyway, they started beating each other up with it, and fighting, and

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03:37:06.770 --> 03:37:12.539

Valerie Fast Horse: and then the chief had to come in and take the Coke bottle, and he threw it away, so they didn't have it anymore, but

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03:37:12.720 --> 03:37:20.340

Valerie Fast Horse: Kind of the thing with the internet is, you know, we can use it for good, or we can use it for bad, or we can use it, and grandma can be, you know.

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03:37:20.630 --> 03:37:24.940

Valerie Fast Horse: Get lost in space, and ignore the grandchildren,

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03:37:25.170 --> 03:37:29.319

Valerie Fast Horse: So, I think it is up to us to provide, you know, those,

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03:37:29.590 --> 03:37:35.959

Valerie Fast Horse: those, PSAs to our customers and let them know, you know, they're there's, you know.

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03:37:36.430 --> 03:37:44.240

Valerie Fast Horse: there's goods and bads of it, but also for adoptability, adaptability, I think that,

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03:37:44.910 --> 03:38:01.000

Valerie Fast Horse: providing locally and culturally relevant content can also help with people, because if you look at the internet, I look at it in, like, there's four pieces to what you have. Your transport, your distribution, your access, and then your content. And content is the whole reason why,

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03:38:01.070 --> 03:38:19.420

Valerie Fast Horse: in my opinion, like, other than that, it's just a bunch of wires. So, I think having for us, for Tribes, that if we have locally and culturally relevant content to put out to our Tribal people, that that might be appealing to some of those who don't or haven't adopted yet.

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03:38:20.700 --> 03:38:28.210

Valerie Fast Horse: For some reason, we still have a 30% take rate out of the total number of customers that we could provide service to.

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03:38:28.330 --> 03:38:31.399

Valerie Fast Horse: And I really don't know why,

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03:38:31.660 --> 03:38:41.330

Valerie Fast Horse: I mean, we have this, like, 9% churn, where people sign up, people disconnect. People sign up, people disconnect, so we hover around 9% churn.

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03:38:41.650 --> 03:38:45.499

Valerie Fast Horse: But, yeah, I like this topic. Thank you.

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03:38:49.880 --> 03:38:54.930

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Valerie, just as a follow-up to that, do you think

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03:38:55.190 --> 03:39:08.169

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: That if, you know, there were digital skills training coupled with getting the access to the internet, that could, one, help increase the take rate or decrease the churn.

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03:39:10.580 --> 03:39:20.530

Valerie Fast Horse: I think it will. Early on, when we first opened up, we have, we built a tech center in addition to providing broadband services.

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03:39:20.650 --> 03:39:28.340

Valerie Fast Horse: So, we built back when there wasn't anything available except for dial-up, and dial-up was a long-distance call.

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03:39:28.640 --> 03:39:33.429

Valerie Fast Horse: And so, we rolled out wireless at first, but we in our tech center, we had a

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03:39:33.680 --> 03:39:44.990

Valerie Fast Horse: a program that we called Combat, and I can't remember what it stands for now, Computers, something, but we taught basic, skills, you know, how to left-click, right click, how to use the internet.

1545

03:39:45.100 --> 03:39:52.790

Valerie Fast Horse: We had our health providers use our tech our technical center to provide skills to,

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03:39:53.230 --> 03:40:03.089

Valerie Fast Horse: cancer patients and how to use it to, you know, research their illness and come up with, you know, some ways to cope and heal themselves. And then we had,

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03:40:03.550 --> 03:40:12.829

Valerie Fast Horse: Oh yeah, and then we had students that came in and used the, lab to do some, what is that called? Cyber tutoring?

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03:40:13.100 --> 03:40:30.580

Valerie Fast Horse: And so, we had our tech center, our lab, and we did a lot of things in there. We taught people how to make videos, how to make scrapbooks out of their photos and digitize them. We taught them how to use the internet to make music for our musically inclined people.

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03:40:30.770 --> 03:40:34.210

Valerie Fast Horse: We taught him how to do e-commerce,

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03:40:34.470 --> 03:40:52.849

Valerie Fast Horse: But that program was a two-year program, and it came and went, but it went a long way, to helping us get the first generation, or the people back at that time get signed up. And that was when we had our biggest growth, but now it's just kind of stagnant it's been stagnant and stale. Like I said, we have a 30% take rate.

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03:40:54.630 --> 03:40:56.309

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay, thank you, that's helpful.

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03:40:56.560 --> 03:40:57.290

Valerie Fast Horse: Yeah.

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03:41:02.460 --> 03:41:11.060

Maci Morin: Great, thank you, Valerie. Thanks for the movie recommendation as well. Next, we will go to Frances. Frances, you have been unmuted.

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03:41:11.550 --> 03:41:28.569

Frances Goli: Hello, thanks, this is Frances Goli with Shoshone Bannock Tribes, and I wanted to provide a little bit of input on broadband adoption when it comes to some of the risks. We recently went through a massive cyber-attack, where we identified

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03:41:28.570 --> 03:41:37.659

Frances Goli: that a lot of our employees lack those digital skills, basic troubleshooting, and phishing attacks. So, we are in a new world to where

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03:41:37.870 --> 03:41:56.400

Frances Goli: employees, our Tribal employees, and our Tribal community have limited knowledge. So that is something that I think would be helpful, having gone just through it and still going through it, is to have more focus on these threats, like cybersecurity.

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03:42:02.670 --> 03:42:03.530

Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thank you.

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03:42:05.900 --> 03:42:11.009

Maci Morin: Thank you so much. Next, we will go back to Boyd. Boyd, your line is open.

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03:42:12.450 --> 03:42:15.839

Boyd Cummings: I just want to reiterate what everybody's been saying about that,

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03:42:15.980 --> 03:42:28.560

Boyd Cummings: At the Tribe, I manage the network also, but here, for the employees, we do zero trust, right? So, nobody has access to anything. Can't really do that with people who are buying broadband, and it's kind of been a problem.

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03:42:28.720 --> 03:42:30.799

Boyd Cummings: We've had people,

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03:42:30.930 --> 03:42:35.290

Boyd Cummings: they don't know not to take emails from people they don't know. You know, they don't know

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03:42:35.650 --> 03:42:50.099

Boyd Cummings: that certain shopping sites are filled with malware, that kind of thing, or they don't know that they should be going to certain parts of the internet, and they can get in legal trouble for it. We got a guy that's probably going to be spending a few years in prison because of this, right? So,

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03:42:50.420 --> 03:42:55.780

Boyd Cummings: I don't know if that can be a part of this or not, but

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03:42:56.100 --> 03:43:04.640

Boyd Cummings: you know, we kind of do our best, and I have classes for the community periodically about, you know, simple things, like not taking,

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03:43:05.490 --> 03:43:10.570

Boyd Cummings: Emails from somebody you don't know, or not opening things, or clicking on something.

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03:43:10.770 --> 03:43:23.849

Boyd Cummings: You know, my father-in-law was the kind of person, every time he got a phone call, didn't matter if it was from a spammer or not, it was a phone call, so you answered the phone. I think we got a lot of people like that when it comes to malware and that kind of thing.

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03:43:23.970 --> 03:43:27.390

Boyd Cummings: They click on every single link, or they, you know

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03:43:27.660 --> 03:43:43.469

Boyd Cummings: their internet becomes unusable at home because their computer that they've got online has become so bogged down with stuff. But then getting them to pay for, like, Symantec or anything, really, is kind of difficult, so maybe just some education on that part might be

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03:43:43.560 --> 03:43:51.869

Boyd Cummings: helpful. I don't see it coming from the normal broadband providers, so it's probably going to have to come from us some way or another, but that's all.

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03:43:57.950 --> 03:44:06.869

Maci Morin: Thank you for your additional comments, Boyd. Sharayah, your hand is still up. I think that might have been left over, but I will check with you,

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03:44:07.180 --> 03:44:11.640

Maci Morin: I will unmute your line, but if you don't want to talk, feel free to lower your hand.

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03:44:11.640 --> 03:44:13.609

Sharayah Lane: Oh, sorry, that was a leftover hand.

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03:44:13.930 --> 03:44:15.850

Maci Morin: Oh, no problem, thank you so much.

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03:44:15.970 --> 03:44:22.020

Maci Morin: Alright, I think that clears our queue. Any last hands before we move on to the next topic?

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03:44:26.830 --> 03:44:27.740

Maci Morin: Alright.

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03:44:27.850 --> 03:44:30.779

Maci Morin: Seeing none, we will move on to Topic 7.

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03:44:31.800 --> 03:44:47.570

Margaret Gutierrez: All right, our final topic, as we're coming closer to time, will turn to effective models and best practices. We recognize that Tribal communities have implemented a wide range of public, private, and Tribal-led approaches to expand broadband access, and that many of these efforts have generated valuable lessons learned.

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03:44:47.630 --> 03:45:03.370

Margaret Gutierrez: Through this topic, we are seeking Tribal input on which types of projects or initiatives have been most effective in advancing broadband access on Tribal lands, and why those approaches have worked. This includes insights on delivery different delivery models, such as Tribal-owned networks, partnerships with private providers.

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03:45:03.370 --> 03:45:08.969

Margaret Gutierrez: Public-private collaborations, or other innovative approaches, as well as the conditions that supported the success.

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03:45:09.010 --> 03:45:19.899

Margaret Gutierrez: NTIA is particularly interested in understanding best practices that can be scaled, adapted, or replicated in other Tribal communities while still respecting Tribal sovereignty, local decision-making, and unique community needs.

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03:45:19.920 --> 03:45:29.740

Margaret Gutierrez: With that context, we'd like your input on the following question. What types of projects or initiatives, either public or private, have been most effective in advancing broadband access in Indian Country?

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03:45:33.720 --> 03:45:37.210

Margaret Gutierrez: Thanks, Ernie. Self-certification in the comments.

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03:45:48.900 --> 03:45:50.669

Margaret Gutierrez: Any comments on this one?

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03:45:58.910 --> 03:46:02.480

Maci Morin: Alright, Valerie, I see your hand raised. You may now speak.

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03:46:07.180 --> 03:46:07.770

Valerie Fast Horse: Hello?

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03:46:08.910 --> 03:46:09.889

Margaret Gutierrez: Go ahead, Valerie.

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03:46:10.490 --> 03:46:22.829

Valerie Fast Horse: Hi, so I kind of want to go backward of what I talked about earlier, and how we got our start was with the Community Connect, and with them paying for that the first two years of operational costs.

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03:46:23.470 --> 03:46:27.480

Valerie Fast Horse: I thought that for, Tribes and

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03:46:27.870 --> 03:46:32.309

Valerie Fast Horse: other applicants that might be just starting on this journey, I think that

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03:46:32.470 --> 03:46:41.920

Valerie Fast Horse: That type of project would be very, very helpful in helping them, you know, get, like, seed money just to get started, and then, you know, they can grow from there.

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03:46:48.000 --> 03:46:49.540

Margaret Gutierrez: Okay, thank you.

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03:46:53.490 --> 03:46:57.890

Maci Morin: Alright, Ernie, I see ya. I have unmuted your line.

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03:46:59.660 --> 03:47:00.630

Ernie Rasmussen: Thank you.

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03:47:01.210 --> 03:47:06.009

Ernie Rasmussen: We, we see a lot of,

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03:47:06.510 --> 03:47:11.130

Ernie Rasmussen: Tribes that, you know, again, this is a new service to their communities.

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03:47:11.620 --> 03:47:21.240

Ernie Rasmussen: And in some ways, expecting Tribes to be able to, you know, become as especially effective

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03:47:21.540 --> 03:47:26.810

Ernie Rasmussen: in a short period of time is going to be a real challenge. This kind of goes back even to the

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03:47:27.020 --> 03:47:32.470

Ernie Rasmussen: you know, the comments I had about, bringing in partnership

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03:47:33.530 --> 03:47:41.230

Ernie Rasmussen: When you can bring in a partner, whether that's an operating partner, a digital equity partner,

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03:47:42.190 --> 03:47:48.139

Ernie Rasmussen: That has The, you know, proven track record and expertise to be able to

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03:47:48.420 --> 03:47:53.810

Ernie Rasmussen: You know, really help you meet your model, meet your goal of

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03:47:54.300 --> 03:47:58.460

Ernie Rasmussen: Having a sustainable network, and this is something that we've discussed with the community.

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03:47:58.950 --> 03:48:05.129

Ernie Rasmussen: As, you know, the goal here is to have a network that is going to be sustainable, and it's going to be available for multiple generations.

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03:48:05.670 --> 03:48:12.410

Ernie Rasmussen: And it's going to be affordable, and it's going to continue to serve not just your family today, but multiple generations down the line.

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03:48:13.240 --> 03:48:17.380

Ernie Rasmussen: Having partners to be able to, that support that mission.

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03:48:18.030 --> 03:48:21.019

Ernie Rasmussen: Again, whether it's in operations or in digital equity.

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03:48:21.240 --> 03:48:26.470

Ernie Rasmussen: I think is I think is one of the real keys that is going to be necessary for,

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03:48:26.640 --> 03:48:29.720

Ernie Rasmussen: For many Tribes.

1611

03:48:30.260 --> 03:48:39.450

Ernie Rasmussen: To be able to successfully launch a network, operate a network, and continue to maximize the effectiveness of that network.

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03:48:40.540 --> 03:48:43.779

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, partnerships is one

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03:48:44.100 --> 03:48:46.249

Ernie Rasmussen: really what I'm getting to the point.

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03:48:46.610 --> 03:48:47.420

Ernie Rasmussen: Thanks.

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03:48:52.370 --> 03:48:57.570

Maci Morin: Thank you, Ernie. Next, we will go to Rob. Rob, your line is open.

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03:49:01.620 --> 03:49:05.740

Robert Griffin: Yeah, just adding to what Ernie said, so

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03:49:05.850 --> 03:49:12.709

Robert Griffin: Even several of us on the call here often talk to each other about

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03:49:12.970 --> 03:49:15.250

Robert Griffin: Things that are going on with

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03:49:15.410 --> 03:49:21.889

Robert Griffin: either economic policy, you know, Indian policy.

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03:49:22.200 --> 03:49:27.420

Robert Griffin: technology, so I always encourage people,

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03:49:27.810 --> 03:49:35.080

Robert Griffin: you know, find out who are leaders for Indian Country that are, you know.

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03:49:35.300 --> 03:49:44.359

Robert Griffin: trying to overcome the challenges. It's always difficult to say that you've succeeded somewhere, because there's always a new challenge. But,

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03:49:44.500 --> 03:49:54.600

Robert Griffin: you know, we've got, you know, like Ernie and Jason and Boyd and some of the other folks, we've got several Tribal nations across the United States.

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03:49:54.620 --> 03:50:02.979

Robert Griffin: That have been successful in delivering service. And so, if, you know, if you need help.

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03:50:03.000 --> 03:50:11.120

Robert Griffin: If your Tribal nation needs help, then, you know, reach out to another Tribal nation that's gone through the same thing.

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03:50:11.120 --> 03:50:29.319

Robert Griffin: Either in the past, or is going through this, or is anticipating that they're going to, because I just tell people, don't fail alone, because somebody is probably already gone through what you're going through, or is going through it at the same time, so

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03:50:29.320 --> 03:50:41.219

Robert Griffin: you know, reach out. I'm, you know, I'm happy to pass out my name. You know, I can put it in the chat, you guys can reach out to me and talk about anything. If I don't know

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03:50:41.220 --> 03:50:54.620

Robert Griffin: what the what the, you know, feedback is supposed to be, or the answer, I can help you get to somebody that might have the answer. So, you know, always reach out, find someone else that can help you understand

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03:50:54.690 --> 03:51:04.110

Robert Griffin: what's going on and ask the right questions. And a lot of times, it is that, especially with the Oklahoma, you know, any broadband office, it sounds like.

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03:51:04.130 --> 03:51:15.700

Robert Griffin: With any government agency, it's a matter of just asking the right questions. And, you know, we have a lot of people that ask a lot of really good questions on this call today.

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03:51:15.700 --> 03:51:24.900

Robert Griffin: And I'm grateful for that, and there are even more people out there that know the right questions to ask to get to the right solution, so

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03:51:25.000 --> 03:51:25.919

Robert Griffin: Thank you.

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03:51:31.300 --> 03:51:39.600

Maci Morin: Thank you very much. Boyd, I am unmuting your line now. Okay, speak whenever you're ready.

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03:51:40.730 --> 03:51:49.209

Boyd Cummings: I like the old adage that, good fences make good neighbors, and I've become more convinced of that as we've gone through a transition of new leadership.

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03:51:49.320 --> 03:51:53.250

Boyd Cummings: And having them, get to know, or having them

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03:51:53.850 --> 03:51:56.730

Boyd Cummings: Kind of be thrown into this, and

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03:51:57.050 --> 03:52:07.490

Boyd Cummings: good contracts, good I guess I'm saying good lawyers make good neighbors, I don't know. But, I think that when you're dealing with having a partner in this, like we have.

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03:52:07.730 --> 03:52:10.540

Boyd Cummings: Sometimes just having that,

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03:52:11.380 --> 03:52:15.849

Boyd Cummings: Kind of in place might help, alleviate some of the,

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03:52:16.320 --> 03:52:21.089

Boyd Cummings: Either confusion or suspicion, even, that might be on one or both sides.

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03:52:21.270 --> 03:52:26.929

Boyd Cummings: So, I would say, yeah, good fences.

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03:52:27.480 --> 03:52:28.300

Boyd Cummings: That's all.

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03:52:32.320 --> 03:52:33.379
Maci Morin: Thank you, Boyd.

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03:52:33.920 --> 03:52:34.840
Maci Morin: That

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03:52:35.160 --> 03:52:42.880
Maci Morin: completes our queue. Last call for any, additional comments on Topic 7 before we hand it off to Margaret.

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03:52:48.140 --> 03:52:50.730
Maci Morin: All right, seeing none, Margaret, back

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03:52:53.420 --> 03:52:54.880
Margaret Gutierrez: I'm gonna hand it to Angie.

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03:52:55.580 --> 03:52:56.560
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Okay.

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03:52:56.710 --> 03:53:13.820
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: Thanks, Margaret. So, we have just spent time going through the various topics, that you see here, where we've talked about program design and reform, the alignment with BEAD, how do we, you know, maximize the impact and use of these funds,

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03:53:13.940 --> 03:53:31.020
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: You know, we heard comments about how we can reduce administrative burden, we talked about technology advancements, as well as broadband adoption challenges, and then we kind of wrapped up with sharing comments around effective models and best practices.

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03:53:31.290 --> 03:53:38.800
Angela Thi Bennett, NTIA: And so, I'm gonna hand it off to Margaret and to see if we have any, you know, additional feedback, from the group.

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03:53:46.760 --> 03:54:08.959
Margaret Gutierrez: I should probably unmute myself first. Before we conclude today's consultation, we want to create space for any additional feedback. The topics we discussed today were intended to help guide the conversation, but we recognize that they may not capture every priority, concern, or perspective related to broadband connectivity in Tribal communities. This is an open opportunity for Tribal leaders to share input that may not have been addressed, or to expand on earlier comments in a way that feels important to your community.

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03:54:09.170 --> 03:54:21.789
Margaret Gutierrez: NTIA values this input as part of its ongoing government-to-government engagement and appreciates the time and thought that goes into sharing these perspectives. With that, we'd like to open the floor. Do you have any other input you would like to share that has not been covered yet?

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03:54:22.890 --> 03:54:30.599

Margaret Gutierrez: We welcome any additional insights, recommendations, or considerations you would like NTIA to take into account as these programs continue to evolve.

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03:54:31.590 --> 03:54:33.559

Margaret Gutierrez: And I see one hand already.

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03:54:34.700 --> 03:54:40.730

Maci Morin: Thank you, Margaret. We will pass it off to Valerie first. Valerie, you are unmuted.

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03:54:41.690 --> 03:54:42.640

Valerie Fast Horse: Thank you.

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03:54:42.800 --> 03:54:46.200

Valerie Fast Horse: I think for the final comments, what I would like

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03:54:46.360 --> 03:54:57.590

Valerie Fast Horse: where what I would hope to happen is that even after these funds are gone, that, you know, that new funding opportunities become available, because

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03:54:57.790 --> 03:55:07.200

Valerie Fast Horse: Even with these opportunities, we didn't apply for every location on our reservation just because of resources, and it's, you know, simply impossible in the timeframe.

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03:55:07.390 --> 03:55:17.029

Valerie Fast Horse: to build out to 100% of the locations. So, you know, we just pick and choose certain areas, but we still have a lot of areas to cover, and

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03:55:17.210 --> 03:55:24.170

Valerie Fast Horse: I'm just hoping other opportunities will become available in the future, even if these fundings, run out.

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03:55:24.470 --> 03:55:25.430

Valerie Fast Horse: Thank you.

1664

03:55:28.240 --> 03:55:29.110

Valerie Fast Horse: No.

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03:55:29.400 --> 03:55:35.049

Maci Morin: Thank you, Valerie. Next, I believe I saw Boyd's hand, so Boyd, you are unmuted.

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03:55:35.960 --> 03:55:39.580

Boyd Cummings: I guess if I have any hope, it's that you guys don't change portals again.

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03:55:40.540 --> 03:55:42.290

Boyd Cummings: That caused us a little bit of

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03:55:42.600 --> 03:55:49.600

Boyd Cummings: problems at first, mostly because I heard that mentioned earlier, but not everything that was in the old portal made it to the new portal.

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03:55:49.780 --> 03:55:52.850

Boyd Cummings: That was interesting for us. That's all. Thank you.

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03:55:53.590 --> 03:55:54.379

Boyd Cummings: Okay, hold on.

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03:55:55.730 --> 03:56:01.020

Maci Morin: Thanks, Ernie. Appreciate I mean, Boyd, appreciate it. Now we'll pass it on to Ernie.

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03:56:03.640 --> 03:56:05.370

Ernie Rasmussen: Let me begin with,

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03:56:06.070 --> 03:56:09.879

Ernie Rasmussen: My hopes are you do not cut and paste BEAD.

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03:56:10.210 --> 03:56:19.200

Ernie Rasmussen: to become the new rules, that you do not, give, LEO the leg up on

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03:56:19.480 --> 03:56:24.250

Ernie Rasmussen: any other design, network design,

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03:56:25.420 --> 03:56:29.800

Ernie Rasmussen: And then, I think I want to finish up with all the comments that we heard today.

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03:56:30.070 --> 03:56:36.539

Ernie Rasmussen: I think all of them are comments made in, in the light of self-determination.

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03:56:36.920 --> 03:56:41.970

Ernie Rasmussen: The idea that they, you know, Tribes are trying to determine their own future, come up with their own solutions.

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03:56:42.280 --> 03:56:49.380

Ernie Rasmussen: And that's, again, the ability to express those to NTIA is an assertion of sovereignty.

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03:56:49.610 --> 03:56:55.089

Ernie Rasmussen: For NTIA to recognize that sovereignty is another matter. That remains to be seen.

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03:56:55.190 --> 03:57:03.720

Ernie Rasmussen: And so, I'm hopeful that NTIA will take all these comments in the light of self-determination and Tribal sovereignty and recognize them.

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03:57:04.030 --> 03:57:07.470

Ernie Rasmussen: And allow Tribes to determine their own futures. Thanks.

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03:57:10.670 --> 03:57:17.040

Maci Morin: Perfect, thank you, Ernie. We will pass it on to Rob now. Rob, you are unmuted.

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03:57:19.230 --> 03:57:32.450

Robert Griffin: Real quick, I just wanted to echo a thought I heard earlier on the call, that we create an annual program similar to Community Connect with a Tribal emphasis.

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03:57:32.770 --> 03:57:45.899

Robert Griffin: You know, no matter what we build out now, and the funding that we receive, there's always going to be additional areas that can be built into. And, you know, that's a program that makes sense, that can be

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03:57:45.980 --> 03:58:02.939

Robert Griffin: you know, managed with the same emphasis and thought process, and, you know, it's likely we're not going to cover every BSL, that there are going to be Tribes that don't get the service with these grants, and, you know, they're always going to be out there, so I think

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03:58:03.030 --> 03:58:09.989

Robert Griffin: just you know, vouching for annual programs to keep coming out. Thank you.

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03:58:13.900 --> 03:58:23.879

Maci Morin: Thank you, Rob. That is the end of our current queue, so this will be a last call for any folks that have any additional feedback before we close things out.

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03:58:32.290 --> 03:58:35.200

Maci Morin: None, I will pass it back to Margaret.

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03:58:35.960 --> 03:58:42.380

Margaret Gutierrez: Alright, with that, we'll close out today's consultation. We want to highlight a few specific next steps and opportunities for continued engagement.

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03:58:42.760 --> 03:59:01.529

Margaret Gutierrez: First, Tribal leaders are encouraged to submit written comments if you would like to expand on any of the feedback shared today or provide additional detail. Written comments can be submitted by email to Broadbandusa@ntia.gov. When submitting comments, please include the subject line, Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant Program, Native Entities Grant Program.

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03:59:01.530 --> 03:59:07.670

Margaret Gutierrez: The deadline to submit written comments is February 13, 2026, at 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

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03:59:08.010 --> 03:59:26.570

Margaret Gutierrez: NTIA encourages you to visit broadbandusa.ntia.gov for ongoing updates related to Tribal broadband programs, consultation materials, and future announcements. And please be on the lookout for upcoming NOFOs, and consider signing up for NTIA's mailing list to ensure you receive timely updates and announcements as they become available.

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03:59:26.800 --> 03:59:34.470

Margaret Gutierrez: Finally, NTIA will be hosting upcoming webinars that will provide additional information on NTIA grant programs and forthcoming opportunities.

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03:59:34.470 --> 03:59:54.310

Margaret Gutierrez: These sessions are another way to stay informed and continue engaging with NTIA outside of today's consultation. We appreciate your participation today and encourage you to stay engaged through your next steps as NTIA continues this government-to-government dialogue. Thank you so much for being here, and of course, my team is always available. You guys are welcome to email us and ask questions.

[END]

Note: Tribal consultation represents a government-to-government dialogue. Statements from individuals not authorized to represent their Tribal Nation have been redacted from this transcript.