



Broadband Technical Assistance Overview for Tribal Communities



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Rural Development

Presentation Overview

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- Key Considerations for Tribal Communities
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Program Overview



Purpose of BTA



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

Funding Vehicle

- **Cooperative Agreement** is the instrument used to fund the support of RD's goals of increasing rural economic growth. In a cooperative agreement, federal employees participate more closely in project activities, often working side-by-side with the cooperator.
- A cooperative agreement differs from a grant in that it allows the awarding agency to be substantially involved in carrying out activities.

Funding Vehicle (cont.)

- The proposed project must include a component that allows for active participation and substantial involvement by RD in the applicant's project proposal.
- Examples of measurable substantial involvement include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Joint convenings of community members, partners, and stakeholders
 - Joint delivery of training for RD programs
 - The development of training sessions and outreach materials
 - Joint efforts to form new broadband cooperatives and support existing cooperatives efforts to expand broadband service into rural areas.
- It is the intent of this project to engage RD staff in broadband technical assistance activities, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify specific tasks where RD staff can provide measurable, substantial involvement in the project. If such tasks are not identified, the application will not be eligible for funding.

Program Eligibility Requirements



Who can apply for BTA Funding?

- Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal Entities.
- States or local governments, including any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof.
- A territory or possession of the United States.
- An institution of higher education (including 1862 Land-Grant Institutions, 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities).
- Non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) IRS status.
- Cooperatives or mutual organizations.
- Corporations.
- Limited Liability Companies or Limited Liability Partnerships.

Funding Categories

- Applicants may only apply for **one** type of funding.
- Up to \$20 million will be available under this Funding Opportunity Announcement
 - **Technical Assistance Providers.** Up to \$7.5 million is available. The minimum award amount is \$50,000 and the maximum award amount is \$1,000,000. Entities submitting an application under this funding category must propose to deliver broadband technical assistance that will benefit rural communities.
 - **Technical Assistance Recipients.** Up to \$7.5 million is available. The minimum award amount is \$50,000 and the maximum award amount is \$250,000. Entities submitting an application under this funding category must be beneficiaries of broadband technical assistance.
 - **Projects Supporting Cooperatives.** Up to \$5 million is available. The minimum award amount is \$50,000 and the maximum award amount is \$1,000,000. Entities submitting an application under this funding category must propose a project that supports the establishment or growth of broadband cooperatives that will benefit rural communities.

Eligible Project Costs

- Award funds may be used for the following purposes:
 - Assist rural communities, cooperatives, consultants and other entities in identifying and planning for delivering broadband service to rural areas.
 - Identify resources to finance broadband facilities from public and private sources.
 - Prepare feasibility studies, financial forecasts, market surveys, environmental studies, and technical design information to support broadband services.
 - Prepare reports and surveys necessary to support the need for broadband services, the price range and to request financial assistance.
 - Analyze and improve operations related to the management of broadband facilities (i.e., implement automation, adopt new software, conduct training, etc.) and to the efficiency of the entity.

Ineligible Project Costs

- Indirect Costs are costs that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs.
 - Construction in any form
 - Activities supporting communities with existing broadband access
 - Duplicative project costs funded by another award
 - Indirect costs
 - Costs identified as unallowable by 2 CFR parts 200 or 400

Key Considerations

- The BTA mapping tool can be found on the BTA website (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/broadband-technical-assistance-program>) by selecting the “To Apply” tab.
 - The mapping tool includes the following layers:
 - Protected Broadband Borrowers
 - CAF2 Auction Winners Census Blocks
 - Colonia Areas
 - Distressed Energy Communities
 - Non-Rural Areas
 - Persistent Poverty Counties
 - RDOF Ready to Authorize
 - Tribal Areas in Alaska (Census)
 - Tribal Area (BIA LAR)
 - Tribal Statistical Area (BIA)
 - Tribal Supplemental Area (BIA LAR)

Key Considerations (cont.)

- **Protected Broadband Borrower Service Areas** are generally ineligible for other entities. They include prior-funded service areas such as:
 - RUS Broadband Loans as defined in the ReConnect Regulation (7 CFR 1740)
 - RUS Community Connect Grants still under construction
 - RUS Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) Loans
 - Service areas that received 100 percent grants under the RUS BIP are eligible if they lack sufficient access to broadband.
- The mapping tool does not identify areas that lack sufficient access to broadband

Key Considerations (cont.)

- A Tribe may self-certify their lands as being unserved.
- A certification from the appropriate tribal official is required if a project is being proposed by a non-Tribal applicant over or on Tribal Lands.
 - The appropriate tribal official is the Tribal Council of the Tribal Government with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands at issue.
 - Any non-Tribal applicant that fails to provide a certification to administer a project on Tribal Lands will not be considered for funding.

Reporting Requirements

- Awardees will be required to report on the progress of the project.
- Annual performance reports will include:
 - A comparison of actual accomplishments to what was planned.
 - A description of issues faced and the awardee's plan to overcome them.
 - Objectives and timetable established for the next reporting period.
 - Activities demonstrating coordination with the State Broadband Office.

BTA Scoring Criteria



Scoring Criteria

Points	Criteria
Up to 30 Points	Project Work Plan
Up to 20 Points	Organizational Capacity
20 Points	Targeted Communities
Up to 20 Points	Rurality
Up to 20 Points	Economic Need
Up to 10 Points	Performance Measures
Total: 120 Points Maximum	

Project Work Plan

- A maximum of 30 points will be awarded for the Project Work Plan
- Contains three major sections:
 - **1) Work Plan Approach** – The work plan approach should identify and detail:
 - Project objectives
 - Rural communities to be served
 - Project key goals
 - Partnerships developed or to be developed
 - Anticipated deliverables of the project
 - Applicants must list all rural communities that will benefit from the broadband technical assistance project and describe characteristics of the communities being served including information such as population size, population density, poverty rate, and other economic indicators.

Project Work Plan (cont.)

- **2) Work Plan Implementation** – Applicants should include details on how the technical assistance will be provided and how it will lead to expanded broadband service in rural areas.
- Applicants should detail:
 - Major task(s)
 - Involvement of key personnel
 - Time period of task(s)
 - Substantial involvement of RD staff
 - Expected deliverables.

Project Work Plan (cont.)

- **3) Budget and Work Plan Alignment** – A detailed budget and budget justification must be provided.
 - The budget justification should align with the tasks detailed in the workplan.
 - Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities discussed in the project key tasks.
 - The format of the budget's narrative can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., but it should be readable on letter-size, printable pages.
 - The information needs to be presented in such a way that the reviewers can readily understand what expenses are incurred to support the project.
 - Statement(s) of work for any subcontractors and consultants must be included as part of the application.

Organizational Capacity

- All applicants must demonstrate the capacity to deliver and/or support broadband technical assistance activities.
- The maximum 20 points for this criterion will be based on the following:
 - The applicant's proposal should demonstrate that the applicant has identified appropriate key personnel, both in terms of number of personnel and qualifications of personnel and should provide specific detail of qualifications of key personnel relating to broadband technical assistance. Capacity of personnel to access data for needs assessments and access to planners and other technical experts will be evaluated.
 - Applicants that are technical assistance providers should specify the number of years of providing broadband technical assistance, detail experience in providing broadband technical assistance to rural communities, identify types of rural communities previously served, and detail experience in performance evaluation.

Targeted Communities

- The applicant must describe how the proposed technical assistance activities will benefit targeted communities.
- The applicant should provide detail on how the project will promote the expansion of broadband within the targeted communities.
- Describe how the plan will help entities plan for and access broadband funding opportunities.
- The applicant can receive 20 points if at least 50 percent of the rural communities benefiting from the project consist of:
 - **Tribes and Tribal Entities**
 - Colonias
 - Persistent poverty counties
 - Distressed energy communities

Rurality

- Up to 20 points will be awarded and points will be awarded for serving the least dense rural areas as measured by the population of the communities served.

Exceptionally Rural	Community with a population of 5,000 or less	20 points
Rural	An area with a population of 5,001-10,000	15 points
Mid-Rural	An area with a population of 10,001-20,000	10 points
Urban	An area with a population greater than 20,000	Ineligible for BTA

To receive rurality points in any of the above categories, an area **cannot be adjacent or contiguous to a city or town having a population in excess of 50,000.

Economic Need

- Up to 20 points will be awarded for economic need.
- Economic need is based on the county poverty percentage of the communities proposed to be served in the application.
- The percentages must be determined by utilizing the United States Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.
- Communities located in geographic areas, for which no SAIPE data exist, will be determined to have an average SAIPE poverty percentage of 30 percent.
- SAIPE data can be found on the BTA website.

Performance Measures

- The applicant can receive up to 10 points based on the proposed performance measures to evaluate the progress and impact of the proposed project.
- Performance measures should be based on the applicant's proposal and must include a description for how the results of the technical assistance will be measured and the benchmarks to be used for measuring effectiveness. Indicators to be used should be specific and be quantifiable.

Available Resources



Available Resources for Application Help

- **Technical Assistance**

- Future webinars to be posted on the Events tab of the BTA website

- **Resources**

- BTA website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/broadband-technical-assistance-program#overview>
 - Funding Opportunity Announcement
 - Fact Sheets & FAQs
 - Application Guide
 - Required items for the application

- **Contact Us**

- <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>





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