

National Tribal Broadband Strategy

The National Tribal Broadband Strategy (Strategy) is a proposed roadmap for action and investment by the Federal Government in broadband access and adoption for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities with the aim of eliminating the AI/AN connectivity gap. The Strategy is grounded in research and recommendations from government, academia, and industry and informed by comments from Tribal Leaders and subject matter experts in various forums, including congressional testimony, the National Tribal Broadband Summit, and a virtual listening session on Tribal Broadband held on September 24, 2020. The Strategy builds and expands on the work of the American Broadband Initiative (ABI) workstreams on Federal Funding, Permitting, and Leveraging Federal Assets. Previous efforts to expand broadband networks in Tribal areas have resulted in significant progress over the last several years; however, much work remains to be done.

IEED’s recommendations are grouped into seven strategies for development ...

- Coordination: Grow a Community of Practice
- Data: Improve Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting
- Network Building Blocks: Expand Backhaul, Middle Mile, and Spectrum Resources
- Funding: Promote Public and Private Investment
- Permitting: Reduce Complexity and Delays
- Adoption: Bring Broadband into Homes and Businesses
- Economic Development: Leverage Broadband for Greater Impact

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DEMONSTRATION ONLY



U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)

Stakeholder(s):

American Indian Communities

Alaska Native Communities

Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs :

Drafting Team - DOI Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs

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Native Americans :

From the deserts of New Mexico and Arizona to the plains of the upper Midwest and the tundra of Alaska, Native Americans are being left behind in the digital revolution.

President Trump :

In January 2018, President Trump issued Executive Order (EO) 13821, Streamlining and Expediting Requests to Locate Broadband Facilities in Rural America and a Presidential Memorandum to the Secretary of the Interior entitled, Supporting Broadband Tower Facilities in Rural America on Federal Properties Managed by the Department of the Interior. These documents establish federal policy “to use all viable tools to accelerate the deployment and adoption of affordable, reliable, modern high-speed broadband connectivity in rural America, including rural homes, farms, small businesses, manufacturing and production sites, Tribal communities, transportation systems, and healthcare and education facilities.”

Americans :

Reliable, high-speed internet has become a staple of twenty-first century life for Americans across the country. Healthcare, education, entertainment, public safety, entrepreneurship, agriculture and many other industries are all increasingly dependent on broadband.

Tribes :

And while over 99 percent of the population in urban areas has access to broadband service meeting a 25/3 Mbps speed threshold, only approximately 65 percent of the population on rural Tribal lands has that same access as of the end of 2019. Insufficient service on Tribal lands not only inhibits individuals’ access to education, healthcare, and economic resources, but, also, impedes Tribes’ efforts to achieve self-governance and self-determination.

American Broadband Initiative :

Developed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs — A product of the Trump Administration’s American Broadband Initiative in collaboration with:

U.S. Department of Commerce :

National Telecommunication and Information Association

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Federal Communications Commission

Institute for Museum and Library Services

U.S. Department of Education

White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

White House Office of Management and Budget

White House Council on Native American Affairs

National Tribal Broadband Strategy KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) :

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- *Office of Native Affairs and Policy (ONAP)*
- *Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB)*
- *Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB)*
- *Office of Economics & Analytics (OEA)*

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) :
Rural Development (RD)

U.S. Department of Commerce (USDOC)

Census Bureau

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

FirstNet Authority

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Stakeholders (continued)

National Telecommunications and Information Association (NTIA)

U.S. Department of Education (ED) :

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- *White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education*
- *Office of Indian Education (OIE)*

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development :

Office of Native American Programs

U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)

Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED)

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

U.S. General Services Administration

U.S. Office of Management and Budget

White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNAA)

White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Program (NITRD)

Tribal Consortia

Alaska Federation of Native (AFN)

Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA)

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA)

Native CDFI Network

Private Sector

Institute for Local Self-Reliance

The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA)

Wireless Infrastructure Association

US Telecom

Vision

The AI/AN connectivity gap is eliminated

Mission

To provide a roadmap for action and investment by the Federal Government in broadband access and adoption for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities

Values

Connectivity

1. Coordination

Grow a Community of Practice

Activity 1. Program

Create a Broadband Development Program

Administrative ~ To begin, the DOI proposes to create a new Broadband Development Program (BDP) within IEED to implement the National Tribal Broadband Strategy and coordinate efforts within and beyond Indian Affairs (IA) to drive Tribal broadband development. The BDP would focus on the macro, foundational elements necessary to support and facilitate Tribal broadband development, and work to share findings with a community of practice including federal, State, local, Tribal, and private stakeholders. Proposed activities include:

- Administer the National Tribal Broadband Grant (NTBG);
- Provide technical assistance to tribes seeking to develop or enhance their own broadband programs;
- Conduct network analyses of programs, funders, and other resources;
- Foster partnerships among federal, state, local, and Tribal governments, and the private sector;
- Support Tribal consultation and engagement efforts; and
- Facilitate increased discussion and information sharing among stakeholders; and,
- Establish a forum for discussion and information sharing among tribes, private industry, schools and other stakeholders.

The BDP would be a technical assistance program, including funding opportunities for tribes to build local capacity in navigating project management aspects of securing high-capacity broadband for their communities, including through libraries and schools, covering partnerships and collaborations. The BDP would complement the work of existing technical assistance programs, such as BroadbandUSA through specialized programming for Tribal Nations, building on DOI's existing relationships with Tribal governments and the BIA's role in permitting for telecommunications projects on Tribal lands.

Stakeholder(s):

IEED Division of Economic Development

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 2. Summit

Convene the Annual National Tribal Broadband Summit

Administrative ~ The BDP, in coordination with inter-agency partners, proposes to continue hosting the annual National Tribal Broadband Summit to connect community leaders with information and resources to identify opportunities for public and private sector solutions to close the connectivity gap in communities, schools, and libraries on Tribal lands. This Summit provides a platform for leaders across the broadband development ecosystem to share best practices, new ideas, and lessons learned from their real-world experience bringing high-speed internet to Native American homes, businesses and community institutions.

Stakeholder(s):

Tribal Community Leaders

Native American Businesses

Native American Homeowners

Native American Community Institutions

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 3. Workstream

Establish a Tribal Broadband Workstream under the American Broadband Initiative

Administrative ~ The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) should explore whether it is appropriate to establish a new workstream of the ABI on Tribal Broadband, chaired by DOI and in conjunction with NTIA’s existing inter-agency processes. The workstream participants could identify and coordinate federal resources and technical expertise for high-speed broadband deployment on Tribal land. The Tribal Broadband Workstream would look specifically for barriers to access resources for Tribal communities and develop recommendations to address these issues and serve as a forum for agencies to share information about their relevant initiatives, best practices, and current projects. Specifically, the working group would investigate and recommend options to increase engagement and coordination with states and with the private sector.

Stakeholder(s):

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

States

Private Sector

Tribal Communities

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 4. Network

Establish a Tribal Broadband Leaders Network

Administrative ~ A foundation of the NTIA’s BroadbandUSA program is the State Broadband Leaders Network (SBLN), a group of State government officials that focus on State-level broadband efforts and State-level digital inclusion efforts. NTIA should collaborate with IEED to establish a similar cohort, the Tribal Broadband

Leaders Network (TBLN). This network would create a space for capacity building, peer learning, as well as promote the availability and meaningful use of broadband. As with NTIA's SBLN, the TBLN would invite members of the ABI workstreams to participate in TBLN meetings as needed, and vice versa, to discuss barriers and potential solutions. In addition, NTIA's leadership of the TBLN would allow for coordination with the SBLN as appropriate.

Stakeholder(s):

State Broadband Leaders Network (SBLN)

IEED

Tribal Broadband Leaders

NTIA

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

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2. Data

Improve Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

Activity 5. Inventory

Continue Development of the Inventory of Federal Telecommunications Assets (JOEL Map)

Administrative ~ The BIA proposes to continue collaborating with the Bureau of Land Management on the existing JOEL Map of Federal Telecommunications Sites and Infrastructure (JOEL Map) to provide more refined data and more accurate mapping of infrastructure on Tribal trust lands. The BDP would coordinate efforts with the BIA Office of Trust Services to refine permitting data from the Trust Asset and Accounting Management System for this purpose.

Stakeholder(s):

BIA Office of Trust Services

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 6. Availability

Improve Tribal Broadband Availability Data

Administrative ~ NTIA should continue development of the National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM). The NBAM project should include a specific focus on mapping broadband availability on Tribal lands. The NBAM is a secure, cloud-based Geospatial Information System (GIS) platform for the visualization and comparison of federal, State, and commercially available data sets. This tool can help identify regions with insufficient service, compare multiple datasets to identify discrepancies in broadband availability (e.g. served vs. underserved or unserved), and produce reports and analyses that could be used for broadband policy, planning, and investment decision-making.

Stakeholder(s):

NTIA

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 7. Deployment

Improve the Accuracy of Broadband Deployment Data

Regulatory ~ IEED proposes to work with the FCC on modernizing the collection of data on fixed broadband and mobile wireless service coverage in Tribal areas in its ongoing Digital Opportunity Data Collection proceeding, for increased accuracy and detail. The FCC’s effort includes establishment and enhancement of data validation policies and procedures, allowing Tribes and individual consumers to challenge broadband

availability data, and holding annual workshops in each of the 12 BIA regions to provide technical assistance to Tribes for collection and submission of broadband coverage data.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 8. Libraries

Collect and Disseminate Data on Tribal Libraries and Broadband Availability and Use

Administrative ~ IMLS, in coordination with the FCC, should leverage its authority to collect and report on data to enhance understanding of the availability and use of broadband by Tribal libraries and related Tribal cultural organizations. IMLS, in collaboration with the FCC, should gather public input from libraries that do not currently participate in the E-Rate program to identify challenges and potential opportunities.

Stakeholder(s):

Tribal Libraries

IMLS

Tribal Cultural Organizations

FCC

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 9. Information

Consolidate Information in Easy-to-Find and Easy-to-Use Spaces

Administrative ~ The BDP, in collaboration with NTIA, should develop, implement, and enhance centralized information resources for Tribes, including information on funding opportunities, permitting, and other critical information. This effort would expand Tribal-specific information on the existing BroadbandUSA website and the IEED portal. NTIA and the BDP should also explore development of joint content and information products specific to Tribal nations.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 10. Barriers

Conduct an Assessment of Barriers to Access among Native Communities

Administrative ~ IEED proposes to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NBAM Program at NTIA to conduct an analysis of barriers to access to broadband services in Tribal areas. This will include geospatial databases with data on broadband availability and use. The BDP would analyze the data to

infer barriers to access (e.g., available service is too costly, no middle-mile connection to the community, limited last-mile build out within the community, etc.) to inform the development of targeted interventions and recommendations for improving access within specific communities. Because the NBAM contains proprietary data, NTIA would make data layers acquired from third-party sources available to IEED consistent with the confidentiality agreements between NTIA and these entities. Upon execution of the MOU, NTIA would establish user accounts and provide training materials to IEED. IEED would identify relevant data about Tribal lands and work with NTIA to integrate data into the NBAM platform, as appropriate. NTIA would provide appropriate guidance to IEED to support this data collection to ensure consistency with other interagency efforts underway, and to facilitate integration into the NBAM.

Stakeholder(s):

Native Communities

NTIA

IEED

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

3. Network

Expand Backhaul, Middle Mile, and Spectrum Resources

Activity 11. Spectrum

Increase Tribal Access to Spectrum

Regulatory and/or Legislative ~ The ABI should collaborate with the FCC to explore specific mechanisms to increase Tribal access to and use of spectrum including:

- Considering, where feasible, a Tribal priority window for FCC proceedings involving Tribal lands,
- Assisting eligible Tribal entities with applying to participate in any Tribal priority window created for accessing unassigned spectrum over rural Tribal lands,
- Continuing to make Tribal Lands Bidding Credits available to spectrum auction winners who provide service to qualifying Tribal lands, • Considering policies to encourage commercial licensees to disaggregate, partition, or lease unused licenses over Tribal lands, and
- Strengthening spectrum buildout requirements for newly allocated spectrum bands and enforcing buildout requirements for previously allocated spectrum bands.

In addition, the ABI should work with the FCC, DOI, and USDA to conduct Tribal consultation and work on the implications of aligning the definition of “Tribal lands” across agencies.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 12. Infrastructure

Make Federal Infrastructure Available for Private Use

Regulatory ~ The ABI should work across all workstreams to identify opportunities and develop action plans to make federally owned and managed telecommunications infrastructure available for broadband development. This will build on existing ABI activities, including:

- Assessing the viability of leasing dark fiber from the U.S. Department of Energy, and
- Harmonizing policies that govern access to federal agencies.

Stakeholder(s):

ABI

U.S. Department of Energy

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 13. Middle-Mile

Develop Plans for Middle-Mile Networks in Unserved and Underserved Areas

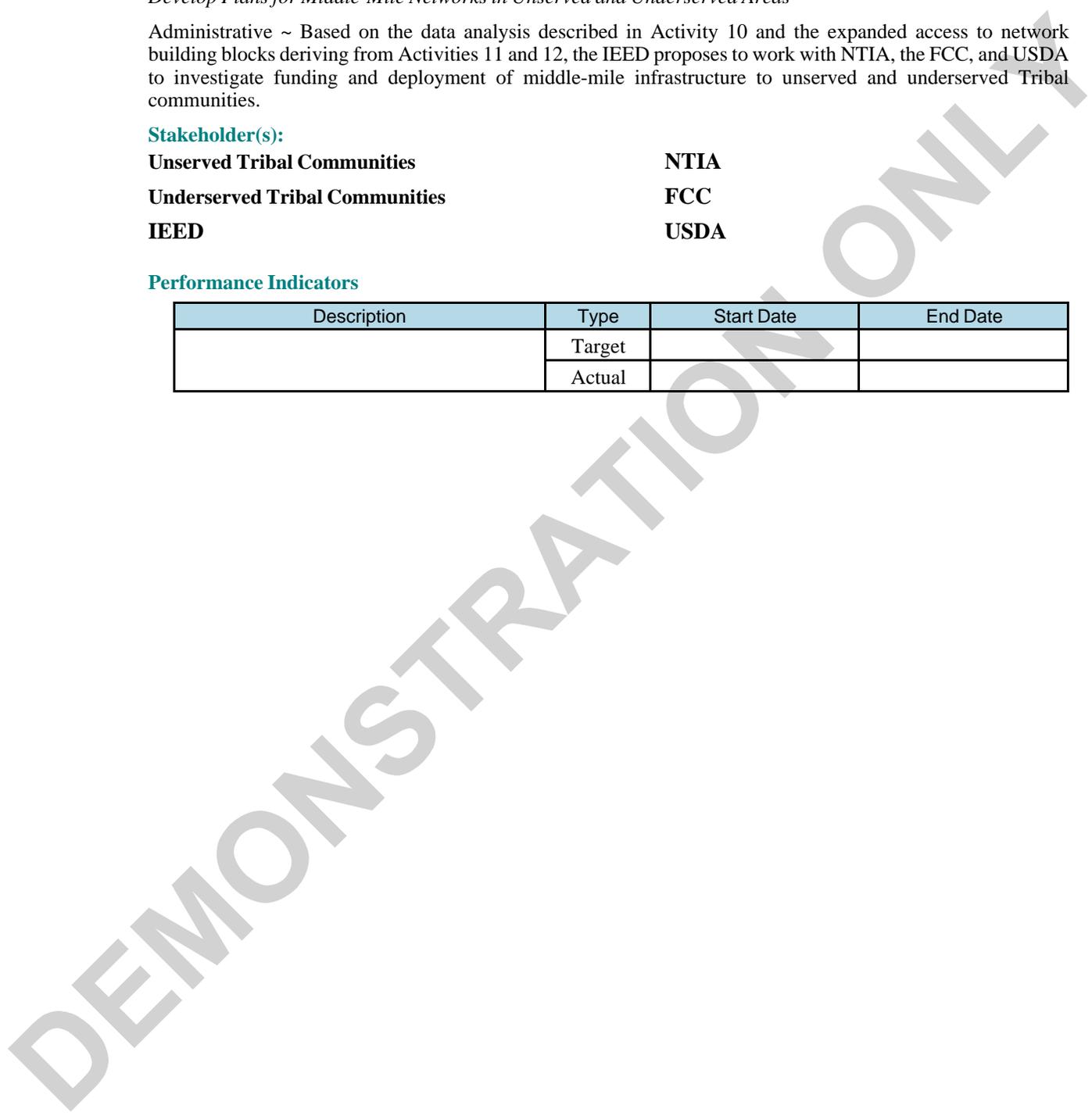
Administrative ~ Based on the data analysis described in Activity 10 and the expanded access to network building blocks deriving from Activities 11 and 12, the IEED proposes to work with NTIA, the FCC, and USDA to investigate funding and deployment of middle-mile infrastructure to unserved and underserved Tribal communities.

Stakeholder(s):

Unserved Tribal Communities	NTIA
Underserved Tribal Communities	FCC
IEED	USDA

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		



4. Funding

Promote Public and Private Investment

Activity 14. Universal Service Fund

Resolve Barriers to Access Universal Service Fund Programs

Regulatory and Legislative ~ The ABI should continue to work with the FCC and Congress to identify barriers to access Universal Services Funds (USF) for tribes and develop recommendations to resolve those barriers, including considering whether to change or eliminate the Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) designation requirements for Tribal lands. Current FCC actions include:

- Seeking comment on adjusting legacy rate-of-return carrier support levels to better reflect the unique and higher costs of serving Tribal lands, and
- Prioritizing USF funding for new development in Tribal lands.

Stakeholder(s):

ABI

Congress

FCC

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 15. Rural Utilities

Resolve Barriers to Access Rural Utilities Service Programs

Regulatory ~ The USDA should identify barriers to access Rural Utilities Service (RUS) funds for tribes and work to resolve those barriers. This work should include:

- Modernizing accountability measures to better track the impact and value of investments, and
- An analysis of the timeline for financial stability requirement to account for the financial realities of broadband deployments in Tribal areas.

In October 2020, USDA introduced an alternative option for matching fund and loan substitution fund deposit requirements for the ReConnect Program. The ReConnect Program is being formalized through rulemaking (see RIN 0572-AC51).

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 16. Single-Use Funding

Eliminate Single-Use Funding Restrictions

Legislative ~ The ABI should work with the FCC to explore the impacts of single-use funding restrictions on Tribal broadband deployments and identify recommendations to mitigate or eliminate any negative impacts. This would include working with Congress to amend Section 254 of the Communications Act to allow tribes to better leverage federally subsidized telecommunications infrastructure for broader community deployment of broadband services and to benefit from “dig once” deployment strategies.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 17. Planning

Increase Funding Available for Planning

Legislative ~ IEED, through the BDP, proposes to increase funding for planning activities through the National Tribal Broadband Grant. This grant program would continue to focus on early-stage planning activities, such as feasibility studies, necessary for Tribes to be prepared for development with the RUS and USF programs, or through other partnerships. National Tribal Broadband Grants are made for up to \$50,000.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 18. Connectivity Program

Implement the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Legislative ~ NTIA should implement the \$1 billion Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, to provide grants supporting access to and adoption of broadband service on Tribal Lands. These grants may be used for broadband infrastructure deployment, affordable broadband programs, distance learning, telehealth, digital inclusion efforts, and broadband adoption activities.

Stakeholder(s):

NTIA

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 19. Matching & Seeding

Establish a Program for Match/Seed Funding

Legislative — IEED proposes to create and manage a new funding program, through the BDP, to provide initial investment, “seed funding,” for Tribal broadband infrastructure projects. These funds would be used to meet matching funds requirements for RUS or other federal programs, as well as to incentivize private investment in Tribal infrastructure projects. IEED estimates projects would cost \$8 million to \$12 million to have sufficient impact.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 20. Infrastructure Corridors

Identify Critical Infrastructure Corridors for Incentivized Investment

Legislative ~ IEED recommends the establishment of zones for incentivized investment in critical infrastructure to unserved and underserved Tribal communities. The Critical Infrastructure Corridors would include broadband and other telecommunications, electricity, roads, energy, and water infrastructure. Critical Infrastructure Corridors should be identified by overlaying Opportunity Zones, NEPA exemption areas, and existing infrastructure networks with underdeveloped and underserved Tribal communities.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

5. Permitting

Reduce Complexity and Delays

Activity 21. Policies

Conduct Cross-Agency Analysis and Changes to Streamline Policies

Administrative ~ Building on the completed analysis from the American Broadband Initiative, the BDP would conduct a cross-agency analysis of permitting procedures for impacts on Tribal lands and recommend additional opportunities for efficiency.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 22. Procedures

Explore Opportunities to Align Permitting on Tribal Lands with Standard Procedures of Other Federal Agencies (SF-299)

Regulatory ~ The BDP would work with the BIA Office of Trust Services to assess how to better align Tribal rights-of-way processing with the rest of the federal government. In particular, this work would look at the potential use of SF-299 as part of the Tribal rights-of-way process.

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 23. Environmental Review

Streamline the Environmental Review Process

Regulatory ~ The DOI proposes to seek a Categorical Exclusion for telecommunications infrastructure projects on Tribal trust and restricted lands (in progress).

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 24. Historic Preservation

Streamline the Historic Preservation Act Review Process

Regulatory ~ IEED proposes to work with the BIA Office of Trust Services, the American Council for Historic Preservation and the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to identify and implement strategies for improved efficiency of Historic Preservation Act Reviews on Tribal trust and restricted lands. This work builds on the USDA Rural Development Memorandum of Agreement regarding Section 106.

Stakeholder(s):

IEED

BIA Office of Trust Services

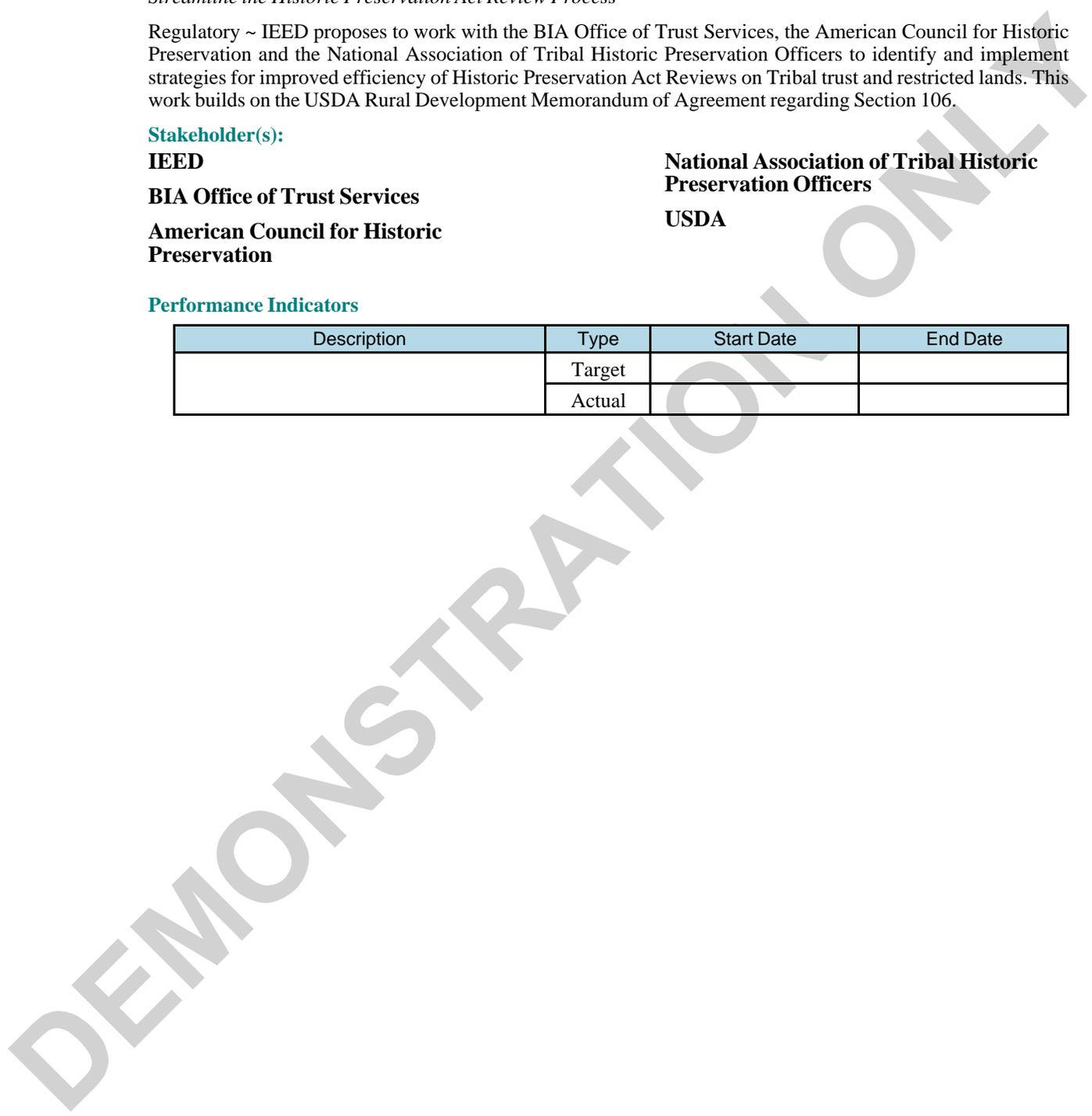
American Council for Historic Preservation

National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers

USDA

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		



6. Adoption

Bring Broadband into Homes and Businesses

Activity 25. National Verifier

Expand Use of the National Verifier for the Lifeline Program among Tribal Programs

Administrative ~ The BDP proposes to work with the FCC and the Universal Services Administrative Company (USAC) to expand the use of the National Verifier for Lifeline program among Tribal programs. This would include working with BIA Office of Indian Services to complete a Computer Matching Agreement for the FASS-CMS (BIA General Assistance Program database) and supporting outreach to Tribes to link their own data systems to the National Verifier. The BDP would also work with USAC, Indian Affairs programs, and Tribal governments to expand awareness of the Lifeline and Link Up programs among potential beneficiaries.

Stakeholder(s):

FCC

BIA Office of Indian Services

Universal Services Administrative Company (USAC)

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 26. Internet-Capable Devices

Identify and Expand Programs to Put Internet-Capable Devices in Homes

Administrative ~ The ABI should identify and recommend enhancements to programs, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ConnectHome program and library hot spot lending programs supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, to provide or subsidize internet-capable devices to individuals, especially students and families needing remote learning support.

Stakeholder(s):

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Institute of Museum and Library Services

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Activity 27. Digital Literacy & Inclusion

Identify and Expand Digital Literacy and Inclusion Programs for Tribes

Administrative ~ The ABI should identify and recommend enhancements to programs, such as the IMLS-supported Digital Literacy Corps pilot, to foster digital literacy and inclusion among Tribal populations. These initiatives may be paired with other critical outreach programs, such as financial literacy, etc. ABI should coordinate with IMLS to increase awareness of the role of Tribal libraries in digital inclusion and broadband adoption.

Stakeholder(s):

ABI

IMLS

Tribal Populations

Tribal Libraries

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

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7. Economic Development

Leverage Broadband for Greater Impact

Activity 28. Activity

Identify and Expand Programs Supporting Economic Activity through Broadband Access

Administrative ~ ABI should identify and recommend enhancements to economic development programs that require or would be significantly benefited by broadband access. ABI should investigate sectors such as: telemedicine, virtual and remote learning, public safety, rehabilitation programming, Smart Agriculture, access to government and community information, Smart Cities, entrepreneurship, and workforce development (including job search and skill building).

Stakeholder(s):

ABI

Performance Indicators

Description	Type	Start Date	End Date
	Target		
	Actual		

Administrative Information

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