



CDFA Tribal Finance Webinar Series

**THE BROADCAST WILL
BEGIN AT 3PM EASTERN**

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Bridging the Digital Divide:
Financing Broadband on Tribal Lands

Bridging the Digital Divide: Financing Broadband on Tribal Lands



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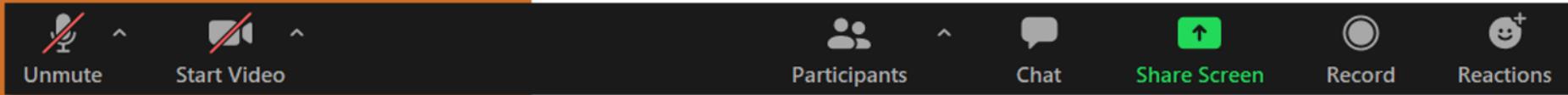
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CDFA Community Facilities Technical Assistance Program for Tribal Communities



Core Components

Tribal Finance Resource Center

A searchable online tool with information about tribal finance programs, resources, and best practices from communities.

Tribal Financing Webinar Series

A four-part online offering that explores the tools and approaches available to uplift native communities.

Tribal Communities Project Marketplace

A dedicated online resource where Tribal communities can submit economic development project information and receive a customized list of potential lending partners, project consultants, and economic development advisors that serve their area and project needs.



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Tom Valandra

Vice President of Tribal Business Development, Tribal Ready, PBC

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Broadband Manager
NM Office of Broadband Access and Expansion



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The importance of sustainability in evaluating financial options for Tribal broadband infrastructure projects



Triple Lens of Sustainability



Financial
Sustainability



Operational
Sustainability



Environmental &
Cultural Sustain-
ability



Framing the Issue: Why Sustainability Matters

- Broadband projects are generational investments—decisions made today shape economic, cultural, and social sovereignty for decades.
- Too often, financial models are evaluated only for speed or cost; sustainability ensures long-term resilience.
- For Tribes, sustainability also means self-determination—projects should not create future dependency on outside entities.

The Triple Lens of Sustainability



Financial Sustainability

- Ensures projects generate steady revenue or cost savings over time.
- Avoids short-term debt traps, ensures reliable operating budgets, and builds local capacity for reinvestment.

Operational Sustainability

- Infrastructure must be maintainable by Tribal staff and not overly reliant on external contractors.
- Training, workforce development, and partnerships ensure networks stay functional and scalable.

Environmental & Cultural Sustainability

- Projects should respect Tribal lands and align with community values.
- Fiber, towers, and energy usage should be evaluated with long-term stewardship in mind.

Evaluating Financial Options Through a Sustainability Lens



Federal & State Funding (e.g., BEAD, NTIA grants)

- Opportunities to build without overburdening Tribal budgets.
- Must plan for long-term operational costs beyond the grant window.

Debt Financing & Private Capital

- Often faster but carries repayment obligations; sustainability requires clear revenue projections and risk assessments.
- Key question: Will repayment timelines align with community adoption and revenue growth?

Evaluating Financial Options Through a Sustainability Lens



Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

- Can accelerate deployment but risk loss of Tribal control.
- Sustainable only if agreements embed Tribal governance and long-term protections.

The Tribal Ready National Tribal Network (NTN)

- A model for collective sustainability—leveraging shared governance, aggregated bargaining power, and economies of scale.
- Ensures no Tribe stands alone in facing financial and operational pressures.

Risks of Ignoring Sustainability



- Unsustainable financing can lead to stranded assets—networks that cannot be maintained or upgraded.
- Dependence on external providers can erode sovereignty over time.
- Missed opportunities for revenue reinvestment in education, health, and future infrastructure.



Path Forward: Sovereignty Through Sustainable Finance

Every financial decision should be tested against:

1. Does it protect Tribal sovereignty?
2. Does it build capacity for future generations?
3. Does it strengthen the National Tribal Network?

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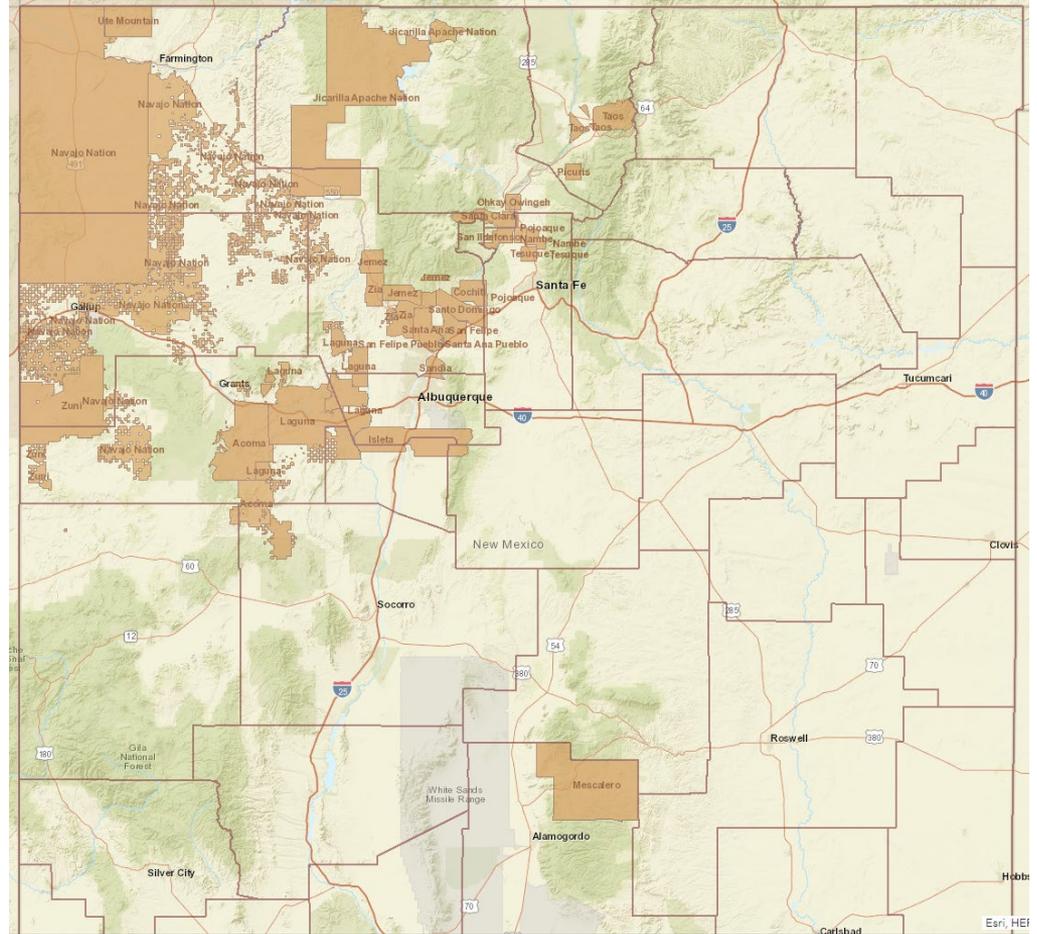
Ovidiu Viorica

Broadband Manager
NM Office of Broadband Access and Expansion

**Financing Broadband on Tribal Lands
(to Sustainability)**

New Mexico

- 23 Pueblos and Tribes /Tribal Nations
- Nineteen Pueblos: Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zuni and Zia
- Fort Sill Apache Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation and the Mescalero Apache Tribe
- The Navajo Nation



New Mexico Tribal Broadband Examples

- REDI Net – Northern New Mexico’s Community Broadband Network
- Jemez Pueblo Tribal Network (JNET)
- Mescalero Apache Telecom Inc. (MATI)
- Navajo Nation Connect Diné
- Middle Rio Grande + Jemez-Zia Consortia

Key takeaways

- Broadband Infrastructure = Significant (long-term) commitment
- Many approaches
- A variety of funding sources
- Champion(s) / Leadership
- Expertise & Trust
- Partnerships
- Long-term Plan / Finance Plan
- Initial (one-time) & ongoing costs (Sustainability)

Costs

Capital Expenditures (CapEx) – Cost to build the network

- Generally large upfront cost, depreciated over time
- May include engineering, permitting, material, labor, components etc...

Operational Expenditures (OpEx) – Cost to maintain & operate the network and provide services

- Generally ongoing costs
- May include personnel, power, network operations, connection to the internet etc...

BEAD, TBCP etc... are capital funds.

Sustainability

- Maintenance & Operations Costs can equal **15% / Year of Initial Costs**

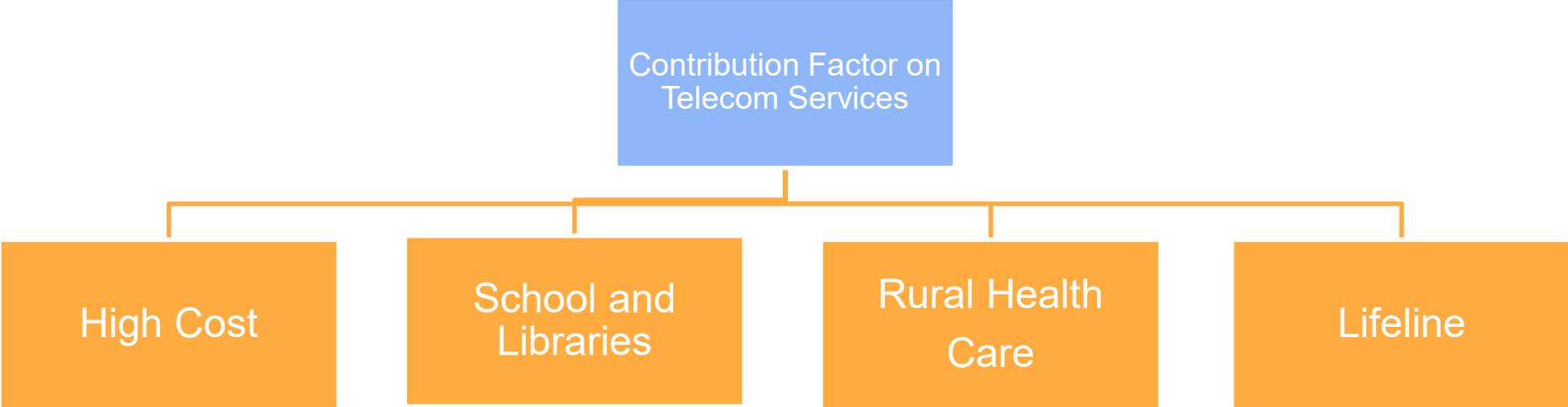
Reminder:

- Personnel
- Network Operations (& Security Operations)
- Outside Plant Maintenance
- Connection to the Internet
- Utilities
- Equipment upgrades
- Helpdesk
- Billing

Ways to get started & reduce costs

- Learn from others & adapt to local conditions
- Develop a team of experts
- Hire vendors for areas where local expertise or resources are not available (Network Operations, Outside Plant Maint.)
- Develop local talent (good technical jobs)
- Develop partnerships & Share resources with others (or other activities). Example: Bucket trucks & line workers.

Federal Universal Service Fund



Final takeaways

- Expanding broadband on tribal lands is tremendously important / necessary
- Broadband is the catalyst for many other opportunities
- Requires proven / specialized expertise
- Requires partnerships and collaboration
- Significant financial commitment (upfront and ongoing)
- **Long-term Plan**
- Now is the time

Bonus tips / Questions

- New generation of leaders and experts for Broadband 2.0

- ABQNOG.ORG

(Network Operators Group)

Technical Conference:

September 18, 2025

- Ovidiu.Viorica@connect.nm.gov

- 505-270-1355



ARIN
ON THE ROAD &
ABQNOG

Networking for the Southwest

ARIN is pleased to partner with ABQNOG for this joint event. Learn more about ABQNOG at abqnog.org.

After the ARIN on the Road program, you'll join ABQNOG, a technical conference centered on broadband and networking for the Southwest region.

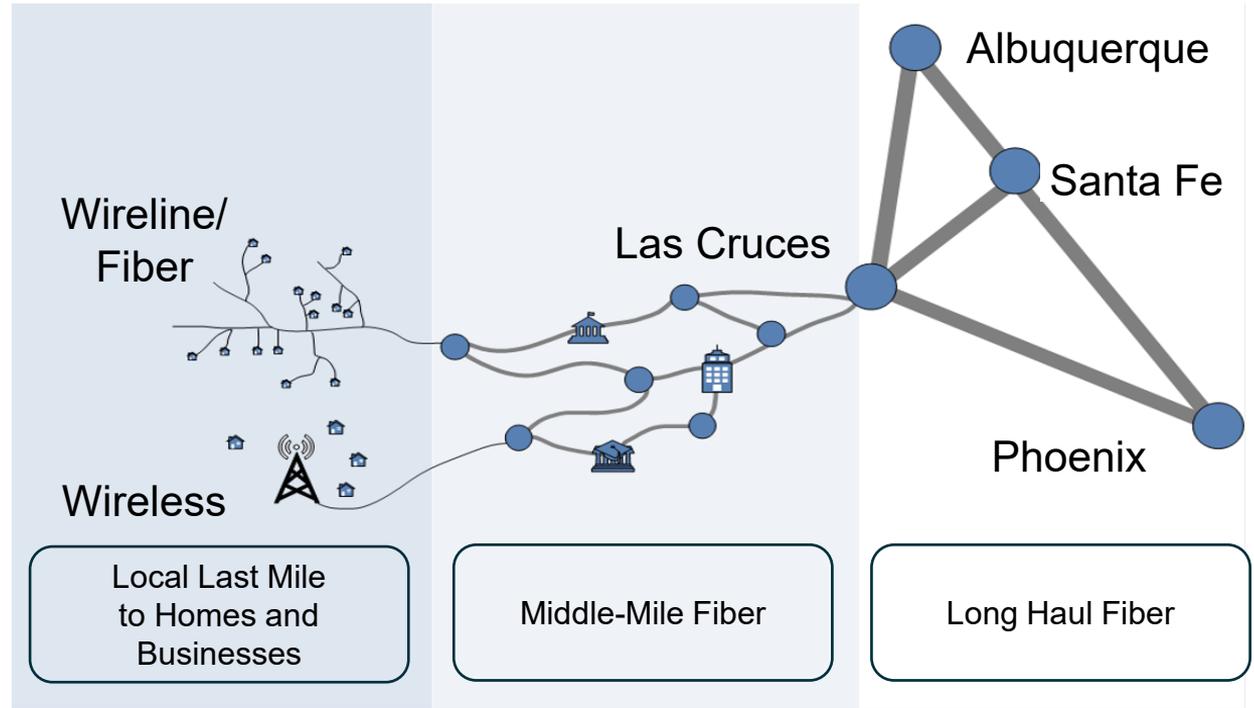
PLUS: The ARIN Customer Service Desk will be on site, and lunch is on us!

Sheraton
Albuquerque Uptown
18 September
9:30 AM-4 PM

REGISTER NOW FOR FREE AT ARIN.NET/ALBUQUERQUE

Additional Resources: Elements of a Broadband Network

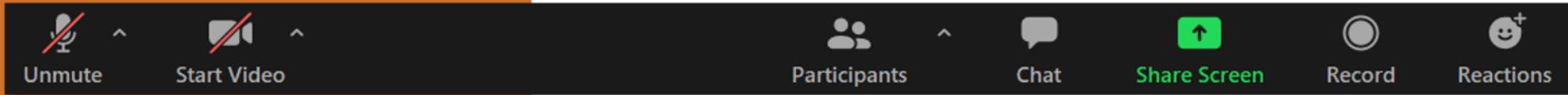
- Long haul fiber
- Middle Mile fiber
- Last mile (wireline or wireless)



Additional Resources: Acronyms

- ARPA – American Rescue Plan Act
- CPF – Capital Projects Fund
- BEAD – Broadband Equity Access and Deployment
- BTOP - Broadband Technology Opportunities Program
- ETC – Eligible Telecommunications Carrier
- FCC – Federal Communication Commission
- FUSF (USF) – Federal Universal Service Fund
- NTIA – National Telecommunications and Information Administration
- OBAE – NM Office of Broadband Access and Expansion
- ROW – Rights Of Way
- RPKI – Resource Public Key Infrastructure
- TBCP – Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program
- USAC – Universal Service Administrative Company
- USDA – United State Department of Agriculture

Audience Questions



**Submit your questions by
using the chat function!**

Upcoming Events at CDFA



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CDFA // BNY Development Finance Webcast Series: Municipal Bonds and Revitalization in Rural America

September 16, 2025 | 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM Eastern

CDFA Advocacy Briefing: CDFA Volume Cap Report Trends and Analysis

September 18, 2025 | 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Eastern

CDFA-Bricker Graydon Webinar Series: Special Assessments and TIF for Mixed-Use Projects

September 23, 2025 | 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern

CDFA Food Systems Finance Webinar Series: Unlocking Local Capital: The Power of a Food-Focused Loan Guarantee

September 30, 2025 | 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern

**OCTOBER
8-10, 2025**

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE SUMMIT



SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

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Topics Covered:

Projects:

- Clean Energy
- Food Systems
- Disaster Relief
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Small Business

Tools:

- Bonds
- Revolving Loan Funds
- New Markets Tax Credits
- Tax Increment Finance
- Opportunity Zones
 - And more!

Early Bird Registration and Discounted Hotel Rate – Ends next week, September 16

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Contact Us



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