

Tribal Technology Assessment

The State of Internet Service on Tribal Lands



What is the Tribal Technology Assessment?

The purpose of AIPI's research study *Tribal Technology Assessment: The State of Internet Service on Tribal Lands* (TTA) was to create the first academic and replicable quantitative study of broadband access, device use, and uses of the internet by Tribal peoples on Tribal lands.

What did the TTA find?

Like a canyon separating those with and without high-speed internet, the Digital Divide has prevented Native Americans from participating in national economic activity on par with their non-Native peers.

Overall, the findings indicate that respondents on Tribal lands are using smart phones as a primary means of accessing the internet. The data clearly show that mobile is preferred purely because there is no other choice—Indian Country has adapted to the only available option.

But mobile devices should never be the sole gateway of internet access. Rather, a broad ecosystem of telecommunications services, including high-capacity at-home wired broadband, is needed to appropriately and adequately address the Digital Divide in Indian Country.

Only the Beginning

There is a scarcity of consistent and reliable federal data that can provide an accurate assessment of internet access on Tribal lands. Further, there is no current research on the affordability of broadband access on Tribal lands. This study extends the limited understanding we currently have. The TTA has created a new baseline for future studies with the expectation of measuring and comparing data in coming years.



**TTA
Report
Findings**



18%

Reservation residents with no internet access at home, wireless or land-based



33%

Rely on cell phone service for at-home internet



49%

Utilize a land-based internet service provider (cable, DSL, dial-up) at home



31%

Have spotty or no internet connection at home via smart phone

"Internet on Tribal lands must include fiber and wireless services; one cannot exist without the other."

— Matthew Rantanen, Director of the Tribal Digital Village, Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association

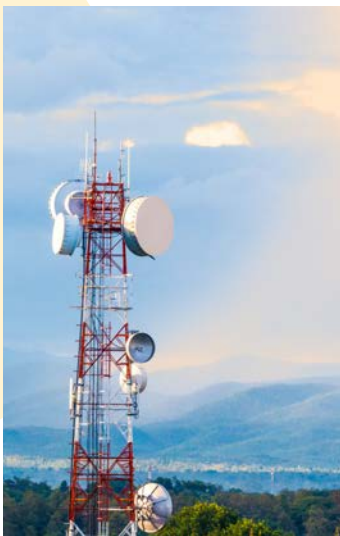
What are the TTA policy recommendations?

Recommendations for Congress



1. Establish the Office of Native Affairs and Policy as a standalone, independent office at the Federal Communications Commission with a permanent annual budget.
2. Prioritize Universal Service Fund dollars for direct impact on Tribal lands instead of subsidizing competition in hard-to-serve areas.
3. Legislate the Federal Communications Commission's commitment to meaningfully include Tribal Nations in the formulation and implementation of regulations through government-to-government consultation.
4. Establish a Tribal Broadband Fund to support broadband deployment, maintenance, and technical assistance training.

Recommendations for Federal Departments and Agencies



1. (Joint Congressional and Federal Agency Recommendation) Identify and recommend pathways for Tribes to work with, or create their own, rural cooperatives, consortia, and other innovative partnerships to provide affordable broadband services in rural and Tribal America.
2. The Federal Communications Commission should prioritize spectrum licensing over Tribal lands directly to Tribal Nations.
3. Create and maintain a federal interagency working group to assist in identifying federal resources and technical expertise for high-speed broadband deployment.
4. Revamp consultation and training workshops offered to Tribes by the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and include other relevant federal departments and agencies.
5. Continually update and allow Tribes to challenge Form 477 data reported by the telecommunications industry to the Federal Communications Commission regarding broadband access and availability, and also include metrics to gauge the affordability of broadband services for rural and Tribal lands.



Opportunities for Tribal Communities

1. Identify regional and local area industry, state, federal, and business/enterprise partners.
2. Develop task forces/oversight bodies to engage on broadband discussions and recruit and retain technical experts to participate in these discussions.
3. Strengthen the work of Tribal governments, organizations, and trade associations to advocate for increasing Tribal access to spectrum licenses.
4. Develop sources of Tribal funding for grant and subsidy matching funds for broadband projects.

Opportunities for Industry/Providers

1. Work with federal, state, and Tribal governments to develop new, reliable, and successful funding sources and authorities to deploy broadband services to rural and Tribal America.
2. Discontinue the practice of stockpiling spectrum licenses over Tribal lands, especially when real deployment and service solutions on Tribal lands are not near-term objectives.
3. Engage and coordinate with Tribes to develop deployment priorities of wireline and wireless services—the Federal Communications Commission 2012 ‘Tribal Government Engagement Obligation Provisions’ provide a framework for this coordination.
4. Develop internal training programs on how to work with Tribes, and develop external training, technical assistance, and internship/mentorship programs for Tribal members.



Opportunities for the American Indian Policy Institute

1. The ASU American Indian Policy Institute should work to coordinate and engage across the broad expertise offered by ASU's schools, programs, institutes, and initiatives to assist Tribal training, certifications, and partnership-building in a manner that exemplifies ASU's New American University vision and community embeddedness.
2. The American Indian Policy Institute should create a conference focused on technology and telecommunications issues, trainings, and policy issues that can be accessible to a broad range of backgrounds and expertise to include Tribal leaders, technical experts, policy advocates, researchers, engineers, philanthropy, and industry representatives.
3. The American Indian Policy Institute should publish materials on 'Best Practices' in technology and telecommunications deployment and adoption on Tribal lands, especially on Rights-of-way and other permitting processes as reference materials for Tribes.
4. The American Indian Policy Institute should work with ASU partners and Tribal governments and organizations to develop information and reference materials on cybersecurity protocols, funding, and training.

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