

Federal Broadband Funding Guide

The federal programs that can pay for your community's broadband, current as of July 2026

Federal funding has never been larger or moved faster than it does today, but the map of programs changed substantially in 2025 and 2026. This guide summarizes each major program, what it funds, and how tribal nations should position themselves.

Act now: TBCP Round 3 is open with \$540 million available. Applications are due **September 17, 2026**.

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP)

TBCP is the only major federal broadband program exclusively for tribal nations: roughly \$3 billion appropriated across its rounds for deployment, telehealth, distance learning, affordability, and adoption on tribal lands. Round 2 awarded \$360 million across 48 projects. On June 17, 2026, NTIA opened Round 3 with \$540 million (part of \$790 million in newly announced tribal funding), with an anticipated emphasis on broadband use, adoption, and affordability alongside infrastructure. Awards begin processing in Spring 2027 on a rolling basis.

BEAD, After the 2025 Restructuring

The \$42.5 billion BEAD program was restructured in June 2025 under the Benefit of the Bargain policy notice. The fiber preference is gone: all technologies now compete on equal footing, which improves the position of fixed wireless architectures that perform well on tribal terrain. States were required to rerun their selection rounds, and as of May 2026, 54 of 56 eligible entities have approved Final Proposals. Roughly \$21 billion in projected savings awaits redeployment decisions, a development worth watching closely. Tribal engagement now runs through State Broadband Offices, which must reference the NTIA Tribal Map Package for projects on tribal lands.

USDA Programs

ReConnect, which funded more than \$2.6 billion across five rounds, has no announced Round 6; USDA's active FY2026 windows are the Community Connect Grant Program and the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program, totaling about \$44 million. These smaller programs remain useful for targeted projects and anchor institutions.

Other Sources

Program	Agency	Best use for tribal nations
Capital Projects Fund	Treasury	Community infrastructure with broadband components; multi-purpose facilities

State broadband programs	State offices	Matching funds, workforce grants, BEAD-adjacent initiatives
E-Rate and Rural Health Care	FCC/USAC	Ongoing discounts for schools, libraries, and clinics
Private and philanthropic capital	Various	Match requirements, working capital, expansion phases

Choosing a Strategy

The strongest tribal applications braid multiple sources: Numu's Red Mountain Networks project for the Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribe combined a \$498,075 TBCP grant with Treasury Capital Projects Fund and Nevada state funds. Start with a needs assessment and accurate location data, sequence applications around open windows, and design every budget for sustainable operations, not just construction.

References

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