

Strategies for Improving Telecommunication Technology - Community Based Planning -

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TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY

1934 Communication Act & 1996 Telecommunication Act

Universal Service principles established by Congress in Section 254(b) of the 1996 Act are as follows:

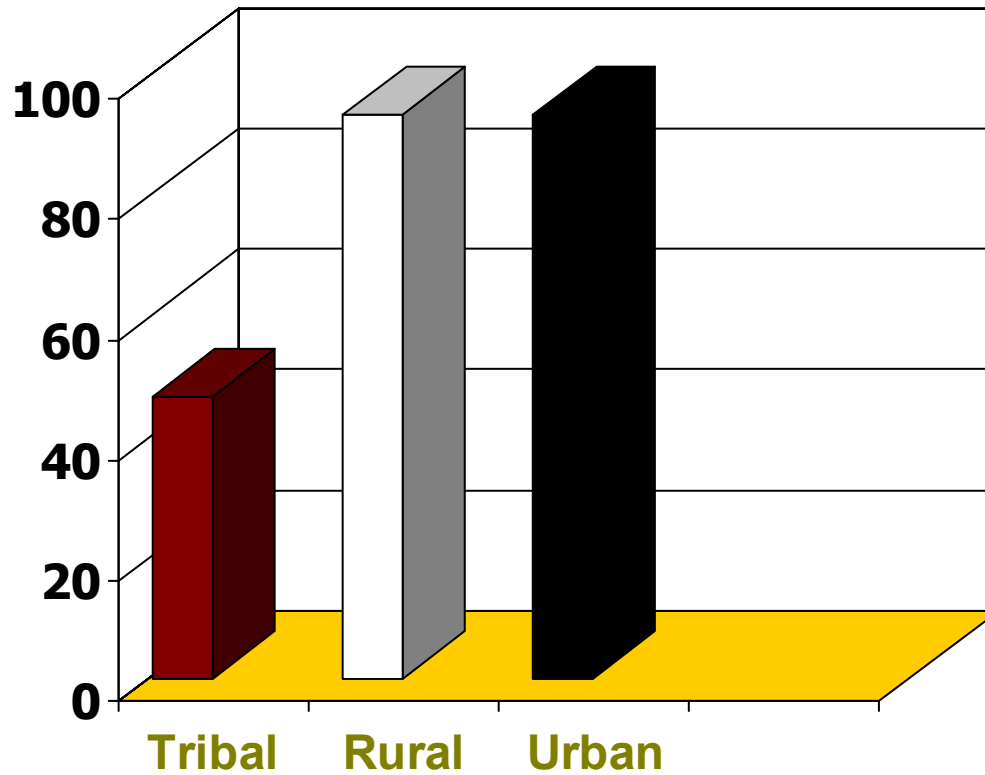
- **Quality and rates.**--Quality services should be available at just, reasonable, and affordable rates.
- **Access to advanced services.**--Access to advanced telecom and information services should be provided in all regions of the Nation.
- **Access in rural and high cost areas.**--Consumers in all regions of the Nation, including low-income consumers and those in rural, insular, and high cost areas, should have access to telecom and information services, including interexchange services and advanced telecommunications and information services, that are reasonably comparable to those services provided in urban areas and that are available at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates charged for similar services in urban areas.

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY

1934 Communication Act & 1996 Telecommunication Act (cont.)

- **Equitable and nondiscriminatory contributions.**--All providers of telecommunications services should make an equitable and nondiscriminatory contribution to the preservation and advancement of universal service.
- **Specific and predictable support mechanisms.**--There should be specific, predictable and sufficient Federal and State mechanisms to preserve and advance universal services.
- **Access to advanced telecommunications services for schools, health care, and libraries.**--Elementary and secondary schools and classrooms, health care providers, and libraries should have access to advanced telecommunications services.
- **Additional principles.**--Such other principles as the Joint Board and the Commission determine are necessary and appropriate for the protection of the public interest, convenience, and necessity and are consistent with this Act.

Telephone Penetration Rates The “Opportunities/Digital Divide”



Tribal Government Role

- Leadership is needed to create a vision and prioritize telecommunication technology improvements or to pursue economic opportunities.
- Assess regulatory authority over current and future service providers, ie., exercise the right and responsibility to designate an ETC that is in the tribe's long term public interest.
- Consult with and participate in FCC Telecom Policy development as mandated by the 1996 Telecom Act and November 2000 Executive Order.
- Locally, Tribal participation by pursuing employment opportunities with service provider, and BOD membership.



Community Planning

1. Establish clear goals and a realistic telecom service improvement strategy.
2. Complete a telecom technical assessment or a Telecom Feasibility Study:
 - ✓ to identify community needs.
 - ✓ to assess existing telecom infrastructure.
 - ✓ to design a system that will meet the community objectives.
 - ✓ to develop financial data.
3. If decision to move forward, then develop a budget to support objectives.
4. Establish timelines to meet objectives.



Project Development

- Develop Telecommunication objectives.
- Define staff roles and responsibilities.
- Create an Ad-Hoc Telecommunication Committee to achieve tribal objectives.
- Know the state-wide technology objectives and how your tribal land area may affect or be affected by these goals.
- Identify internal/external resources: financial, engineering, legal/regulatory, business development, etc.



Jurisdictional Development

- Exercising Tribal Jurisdiction over utility providers – establish standards that align with federal/tribal and rural telecom policy.
- Expand existing utility code to incorporate telecom, or create a new code.
- Review and perfect Easement and Rights-of-Way agreements.
- Assess Utility Easement values / strategic opportunities.



Telecommunication Engineering & Technical Requirements

- Local Exchange Boundaries / Redefining Tribal Exchange Boundaries.
- Consider New Cost Study Area / Tribal Community of Interest.
- Assessment, Appraisal, and potential Acquisition of LEC's Infrastructure.
- Area Coverage Survey.
- Loan Design i.e., Network Design to meet RUS and Industry Requirements.
- Financial Projections.



How to Finance/Fund Service Improvement Strategies

External Funding Options:

- USDA/RUS/Rural Development
- CoBank
- RTFC
- Universal Service Support
- ANA
- Private/Public Sector Financing



How will Tribal Nations achieve economic opportunity by closing the digital divide?

- ✓ By working with existing provider
- ✓ by partnering to build out on tribal land
- ✓ by pursuing telecom utility ownership.

Thank You!