



## Telecom Notice of Consultation CRTC 2026-47

PDF version

Gatineau, 18 March 2026

*Public record: 1011-NOC2026-0047*

### Call for comments – Developing an Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund

**Deadline for submission of interventions: 18 September 2026**

**Deadline for submission of replies: 18 December 2026**

[\[Submit an intervention or view related documents\]](#)

#### Summary

A summary of this notice is available in the following languages: Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) [in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#) (Eastern)] and in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#) (Western)], Dëne Sųłné (Chipewyan) [in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#)], Innu-Aimun (Innu) [in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#)], Michif (in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#)), Mikmaq (Mi'kmawí'simk) [in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#)], Plains Cree (paskwâwinîmowin) [in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#)], and South Baffin Inuktitut (Qikiqtaaluk nigiani) [in [HTML](#) and [PDF](#)].

Everyone in Canada needs access to reliable, affordable, and high-quality Internet and cellphone services for every part of their daily lives.

Through its Broadband Fund, the Commission contributes to a broad effort by federal, provincial, and territorial governments to address the gap in connectivity in underserved rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Canada. To date, the Commission has selected 70 projects to receive funding from the Broadband Fund. These projects will help deliver high-speed Internet and cellphone services to over 320 communities, representing over 56,000 households. The projects will also help connect over 630 kilometres of major transportation roads and build nearly 6,000 kilometres of fibre to communities.

While progress has been made to improve connectivity across Canada, Indigenous communities continue to be disproportionately affected by a lack of availability of high-speed connectivity. In response, the Commission has committed to developing an Indigenous stream for Indigenous applicants who are seeking funding from the Broadband Fund. This stream aims to reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants with the goal of helping to close the connectivity gap for Indigenous communities.

In this notice of consultation, the Commission is gathering views on the development of the Broadband Fund's Indigenous stream.

Hearing from Indigenous voices is essential to developing a robust public record in this process so that the Commission can achieve its aim of helping to close the connectivity gap for Indigenous communities. To that end, the Commission will conduct comprehensive engagement with Indigenous peoples throughout this process to ensure that Indigenous perspectives meaningfully inform its outcomes.

## **Background**

### **The Broadband Fund**

1. The Commission established the Broadband Fund in 2019 to help ensure that all people in Canada, regardless of where they live, have access to fast and reliable Internet and cellphone services.
2. While progress has been made to improve connectivity in many parts of the country, access in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities continues to lag behind. According to the latest figures, 96% of households in Canada have access to broadband Internet that delivers universal service objective-level speeds.<sup>1</sup> However, on First Nations reserves, households with access to high-speed Internet services decreases to 61%.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Broadband Fund policy review**

3. In March 2023, the Commission launched the Broadband Fund policy review (the policy review). The policy review had three objectives:
  - to improve the speed and efficiency of the funding process;
  - to help advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; and

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<sup>1</sup> The universal service objective is defined as the following: Canadians, in urban areas as well as in rural and remote areas, have access to voice services and broadband Internet access services, on both fixed and mobile wireless networks. The Commission set out the following criteria to measure the successful achievement of the universal service objective:

- Canadian residential and business fixed broadband Internet access service subscribers should be able to access speeds of at least 50 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 10 Mbps upload (50/10 Mbps), and to subscribe to a service offering with an unlimited data allowance; and
- the latest generally deployed mobile technology should be available not only in Canadian homes and businesses, but on as many major transportation roads as possible in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> These figures are outlined in the Commission's Communication Market Report: [Current trends - High-speed broadband](#). Starting at year-end 2022, the 2021 Statistics Canada census was used. Prior to that, the 2016 census was used.

- to increase access to high-speed Internet and cellphone services across Canada.
4. To meet these objectives in a timely way, a phased approach to conducting the review was adopted. The first phase, which concluded with a new Broadband Fund policy (hereafter, the new Broadband Fund policy) published in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, focused on streamlining and improving the process for funding capital projects, reducing barriers for Indigenous applicants, and increasing requirements for community engagement and consent by Indigenous communities. In the next phases, the Commission will consider whether to fund projects that aim to improve network resiliency and whether the Broadband Fund should address any additional funding gaps.
  5. As part of the policy review, the Commission also sought input on modifying the Broadband Fund policy to establish an Indigenous-specific funding stream.
  6. The Commission heard from numerous Indigenous interveners on the record of the policy review proceeding. Many of these interveners considered that it was challenging to apply for funding from the Broadband Fund and provided recommendations on how the Commission can reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants.
  7. Many interveners stated that the Broadband Fund needed to (i) be more responsive to challenges facing Indigenous applicants (e.g., simplifying the application process and reducing the difficulties in obtaining financing); (ii) encourage greater Indigenous participation; and (iii) address the unique needs of Indigenous applicants (e.g., by providing flexible deadlines, upfront and ongoing operational funding, support for ownership and control of infrastructure and services, and culturally relevant workforce training that integrates Indigenous customs and/or considerations).
  8. Further to the streamlined and improved process for funding capital projects in the new Broadband Fund policy, including reduced barriers for Indigenous applicants, the Commission announced that it would launch a separate process to develop an Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund in collaboration with Indigenous groups and communities.

### **Why we are launching this proceeding**

9. The Commission is launching this proceeding to develop an Indigenous stream under the Broadband Fund. The Indigenous stream will provide a tailored process to access broadband funding that aims to reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants with the goal of helping to close the connectivity gap for Indigenous communities.
10. The information and views collected in this proceeding will help the Commission better understand the challenges faced by Indigenous applicants in obtaining funding for broadband projects. By improving its understanding of Indigenous perspectives, the Commission seeks to foster meaningful collaboration with Indigenous peoples to identify barriers and explore possible solutions to help reduce those barriers.

## Collaboration with Indigenous groups and communities

11. The Commission's collaborative development of the Indigenous stream incorporates a distinctions-based approach that recognizes and respects the unique rights, perspectives, and priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. This approach focuses on reducing barriers to participation identified by Indigenous peoples and providing the necessary capacity and resources to support and increase their participation in relevant processes and initiatives.
12. Since January 2024, Commission staff, including the [Indigenous Relations Team](#), has conducted one-on-one meetings and feedback sessions (hereafter referred to as early engagement sessions) with National Indigenous Organizations, Indigenous governments, Indigenous telecommunications service providers, and many other Indigenous organizations.
13. Participants in early engagement sessions raised many issues that aligned with those raised by Indigenous governments, communities, and service providers in the policy review proceeding, such as (i) complex application processes; (ii) prolonged evaluation and approval timelines; (iii) complex financial regulations, including onerous reporting requirements; and (iv) an inability to request funding for operational costs. Participants also emphasized the importance of Indigenous-owned and -led projects and called for funding models that empower First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to take leadership roles in broadband projects.
14. Many participants in early engagement sessions recommended extending engagement and intervention timelines and providing ongoing support to help ensure that Indigenous perspectives inform the development of the Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund. Participants also recommended (i) streamlining processes to provide clearer guidance and more flexibility to facilitate Indigenous participation and (ii) developing sustainable funding models to provide long-term financial support for Indigenous-owned networks.
15. The feedback received from Indigenous interveners during the policy review proceeding and from participants in early engagement sessions has helped the Commission identify some key issues for consideration in the development of the Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund.

## Call for comments

16. The Commission calls for comments on the topics set out below, the questions listed in the appendix to this notice, and any other area of the Broadband Fund that can be modified to help reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants with the goal of helping to close the connectivity gap for Indigenous communities. The Commission will accept interventions that it receives on or before **18 September 2026**. Only parties to the proceeding (i.e., those that have submitted an intervention before **18 September 2026**) can participate in further stages of the proceeding. The deadline for parties to file replies to matters raised during the intervention phase is **18 December 2026**.

17. Information on how to participate in this proceeding can be found in the [What you need to know to participate in this proceeding](#) section later in this notice. For questions or more information on how to participate, contact the Commission by email at [FLB-BBF@crtc.gc.ca](mailto:FLB-BBF@crtc.gc.ca) or by phone at 1-877-249-2782. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and organizations requiring assistance to submit comments, including oral interventions, can contact the Commission's Indigenous Relations Team at [era-irt@crtc.gc.ca](mailto:era-irt@crtc.gc.ca).
18. In addition, the Commission intends to provide a draft of the proposed policy for the Indigenous stream on the record for comment prior to the Commission's final approval. This will provide interveners with an opportunity to review the draft policy and provide their final comments prior to the Commission making its final decision.

### **What we are examining in this proceeding**

19. In this proceeding, the Commission will examine the following topics:
- an application and funding process that better meets the needs of Indigenous applicants;
  - reporting requirements tailored to Indigenous funding recipients; and
  - eligible costs under the Indigenous stream.

### **A distinctions-based approach to funding and engagement**

20. Several participants in early engagement sessions emphasized that an Indigenous funding stream should be guided by lived experiences and structured to support Indigenous-owned and -led projects. They highlighted the importance of a distinctions-based<sup>3</sup> funding program that is both (i) individually specific, meaning that it is tailored to the unique needs of the individuals or organizations within a group; and (ii) specifically individual, meaning that it recognizes the unique characteristics of individuals within a group.
21. For that reason, the Commission will, to the greatest extent possible, aim to implement a distinctions-based approach during this proceeding, and it welcomes input on how it can accommodate a distinctions-based approach in the Indigenous stream. A distinctions-based approach helps to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of Indigenous peoples are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented. This approach acknowledges that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis all have distinct and unique histories, legal rights, and systems of

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<sup>3</sup> As per [Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples](#), a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented. The work of forming renewed relationships based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership must reflect the unique interests, priorities, and circumstances of each People.

governance. Incorporating a distinctions-based approach to funding programs and engagement requires using practices that meet the diverse needs of Indigenous applicants.

### **A funding process that better meets the needs of Indigenous applicants**

22. The Commission manages all stages of the funding process for the Broadband Fund. This includes developing application forms, determining when to issue calls for funding, evaluating applications, selecting projects for funding, and monitoring ongoing and completed projects. The evaluation and monitoring processes involve collecting extensive information from applicants to inform the application evaluation process and to monitor the progress of ongoing projects.
23. The evaluation of applications for funding from the Broadband Fund takes place in three stages. First, the Commission considers whether an application meets certain eligibility criteria; applications that do not meet the criteria will not be considered. Second, the Commission evaluates proposed projects based on certain assessment criteria to identify a set of selectable projects. Third, from the set of selectable projects identified, the Commission selects projects for funding based on certain project selection considerations.
24. In the new Broadband Fund policy, the Commission announced that it is streamlining the funding process to offer greater transparency and certainty to applicants, lessen the administrative burden, and reduce duplication of effort. Streamlining measures include the following:
  - reducing the amount of information required at all stages of the funding process, from application to project completion; and
  - making the funding distribution and claims reporting process easier for funding recipients by, for example, consolidating two separate recipient reports into one report.
25. In this proceeding, the Commission is reviewing the funding process for the Broadband Fund and looking at ways to further tailor it for the Indigenous stream to help reduce barriers that may make it challenging for Indigenous applicants to apply for funding. This could include streamlining the application process beyond what was already implemented in the new Broadband Fund policy, for example, by considering whether existing eligibility and assessment criteria should be modified for Indigenous applicants.
26. Questions relating to the funding process (namely, the application process and eligibility and assessment criteria) can be found in [Section B](#) and [Section C](#) of the appendix to this notice.

### **Reporting requirements tailored to Indigenous funding recipients**

27. When a project is approved for funding under the Broadband Fund, a funding recipient must meet certain conditions for funding to be released. These include demonstrating that the project has attained project milestones and is fulfilling the specific conditions of service imposed pursuant to section 24.1 of the [Telecommunications Act](#) (the Act). The reporting requirements for funding

recipients are set in the new Broadband Fund policy and in the funding decisions for each approved project.

28. Many participants in early engagement sessions expressed that the Commission's existing reporting requirements can be burdensome. They emphasized the importance of making future reporting processes balanced and ensuring accountability of funds by justifying expenses in their own words, while also supporting relationship-building with the Commission. Some participants suggested providing real-time support during application periods to improve submission success rates and recommended adding a free-form section in applications for applicants to explain project details and justify expenses in their own words. Some participants also suggested simplifying the eligible costs claims processes and reporting requirements, including options for streamlined financial reporting.
29. The Commission took steps in the new Broadband Fund policy to improve reporting requirements. For example, the Commission consolidated two separate recipient reports into one report that the funding recipient must submit once the project is complete (the project completion report).
30. In this proceeding, the Commission is examining whether further measures should be taken to tailor reporting requirements for Indigenous funding recipients. Questions relating to reporting requirements can be found in [Section E](#) of the appendix to this notice.

#### **Eligible costs under the Indigenous stream**

31. Currently, the Commission provides funding for eligible costs such as costs for activities that are directly associated with implementing the proposed project as set out in the Broadband Fund policy and in the Commission's funding decisions. This could include engineering and design, environmental scans and assessments, and purchase and installation of equipment and infrastructure (including the provision of backhaul capacity and other one-time access-driven costs). Ineligible costs include post-project expenses, application development costs, existing assets, ongoing operations, and general overhead.
32. Several participants in early engagement sessions expressed the need for (i) long-term financial support for Indigenous-owned networks due to the high costs of maintaining broadband networks in remote and underserved areas and (ii) ongoing operational funding and investment in training. They suggested that this support, ongoing funding, and investment would enable more sustainable project development and help sustain telecommunications services once built. Many participants also emphasized the need for financial flexibility to support connectivity projects that may be unprofitable or unsustainable without funding.
33. Strong partnerships, community involvement, and Indigenous ownership in broadband Internet and mobile wireless infrastructure projects were also identified in early engagement sessions as important factors to sustainable project development. Most participants highlighted the need for upfront funding to cover initial and early-stage project costs, and targeted funding for local

training (not only to build technical capacity for network operations and maintenance but also to develop managerial expertise). Most interveners in the policy review proceeding similarly recommended providing up-front funding and funding for training to Indigenous applicants.

34. To address the unique cost-related barriers for Indigenous applicants, the Commission is looking for input on whether there are additional costs that should be eligible for funding under the Indigenous stream to help ensure project success. Eligible and ineligible costs are outlined in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section C, subsections 12 and 13](#).
35. Eligible costs are addressed in [Q12](#) and [Q18](#) of the appendix to this notice.

## What you need to know to participate in this proceeding

### Procedure

36. The *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure* (the [Rules of Procedure](#)) apply to the present proceeding. Accordingly, the procedure set out below must be read in conjunction with the Rules of Procedure and related documents, which can be found on the Commission's website under [Statutes and Regulations](#). The guidelines set out in Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-959 provide information to help interested persons and parties understand the Rules of Procedure so that they can more effectively participate in Commission proceedings.

### Information sessions on how to participate

37. The Commission will hold open information sessions for anyone interested in learning more about how to participate in this consultation. To take part, contact us by email at [era-irt@crtc.gc.ca](mailto:era-irt@crtc.gc.ca) or by phone at 1-866-236-0122.

### Submitting comments

38. The Commission invites comments that address the questions set out in the appendix to this notice. The Commission will accept interventions that it receives on or before **18 September 2026**. Only parties to the proceeding (i.e., those that have submitted an intervention before **18 September 2026**) can participate in further stages of the proceeding. The deadline for parties to file replies to matters raised during the intervention phase is **18 December 2026**.
39. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and organizations requiring assistance submitting comments, including oral interventions, can contact the Commission's Indigenous Relations Team at [era-irt@crtc.gc.ca](mailto:era-irt@crtc.gc.ca).
40. Any interested persons and parties can request accommodations to participate in this Commission proceeding. This could be related to disability, or to other reasons, like religious observance, or to a combination of reasons. If you wish to request accommodations in filing your comments, you

are encouraged to make your request **within the first 15 days** after this notice of consultation is posted on the Commission's website.

41. Interested persons and parties who require assistance submitting comments can contact the Commission's Hearings & Public Proceedings group at [hearing@crtc.gc.ca](mailto:hearing@crtc.gc.ca).
42. For more information on accessibility and accommodations in Commission proceedings, see Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin 2025-95.
43. Pursuant to Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin 2015-242, the Commission expects incorporated entities and associations, and encourages all interested persons and parties, to file submissions for Commission proceedings in accessible formats (for example, text-based file formats that allow text to be enlarged or modified, or read by screen readers). To provide assistance in this regard, the Commission has posted on its website [guidelines](#) for preparing documents in accessible formats.
44. Interested persons and parties are permitted to coordinate, organize, and file, in a single submission, interventions by other interested persons or parties who share their position. Information on how to file this type of submission, known as a joint supporting intervention, as well as a template for the covering letter to be filed by the parties, can be found in Telecom Information Bulletin 2011-693.
45. Submissions longer than five pages should include a summary. Each paragraph of all submissions should be numbered, and the line **\*\*\*End of document\*\*\*** should follow the last paragraph. This will help the Commission verify that the document has not been damaged during electronic transmission.
46. All documents required to be served on parties to the proceeding must be served using the contact information contained in the interventions. An intervention or answer from a respondent must be filed with the Commission and served on the applicant on or before the above-mentioned date. An answer from a respondent must also be served on any other respondent.
47. The Commission encourages interested persons and parties to monitor the record of the proceeding, available on the Commission's website, for additional information that they may find useful when preparing their submissions.
48. Submissions must be filed by sending them to the Secretary General of the Commission using **only one** of the following means:

**by completing the**  
[\[Intervention/comment/answer form\]](#)

or

**by mail to**  
CRTC, Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0N2

or

by fax at  
819-994-0218

49. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, a document must be received by the Commission and all relevant parties by 5 p.m. Vancouver time (8 p.m. Gatineau time) on the date it is due. Parties are responsible for ensuring the timely delivery of their submissions and will not be notified if their submissions are received after the deadline. Late submissions, including those due to postal delays, will not be considered by the Commission and will not be made part of the public record.
50. The Commission will not formally acknowledge submissions. It will, however, fully consider all submissions, which will form part of the public record of the proceeding, provided that the procedure for filing set out above has been followed.
51. Parties who send documents electronically must ensure that they will be able to prove, upon Commission request, that filing, or where required, service of a particular document was completed. Accordingly, parties must keep proof of the sending and receipt of each document for 180 days after the date on which the document is filed or served. The Commission advises parties who file or serve documents by electronic means to exercise caution when using email for the service of documents, as it may be difficult to establish that service has occurred.

### **Confidentiality notice**

52. The Commission's proceedings are designed to allow members of the public to provide input so that it can make better, more informed decisions. As a result, the general rule is that all information filed with the Commission is placed on the public record and can be reviewed by all parties and members of the public.
53. However, the Commission also often needs detailed information from the companies it regulates and supervises to make an informed decision. This information can be commercially sensitive, especially as the environment in which the companies operate becomes more competitive. The Commission will therefore accept certain information as confidential.
54. Parties can designate information as confidential under subsection 39(1) of the Act and provide a detailed rationale as to why that information should be considered confidential. The Commission reminds parties that when a document is filed with confidential information, an abridged version must also be filed so that it can be included in the public record.

## Privacy notice

55. Please note the following:

- Documents will be posted on the Commission's website exactly as received, in the official language and format in which they are received. This includes any personal information contained in them, such as full names, email addresses, postal/street addresses, and telephone and fax numbers.
- All personal information parties provide as part of this public proceeding, except information designated as confidential, will be posted on the Commission's website and can be accessed by others.
- However, the information parties provide can only be accessed from the web page of this particular proceeding. As a result, a general search of the Commission's website using either its search engine or a third-party search engine will not provide access to the information that was provided as part of this public proceeding.
- The personal information that parties provide will be used and may be disclosed for the purpose for which the information was obtained or compiled by the Commission or for a use consistent with that purpose.

## Availability of documents

56. Links to interventions, as well as other documents referred to in this notice, are available on the Commission's [Consultations and hearings: have your say](#) page.

57. Interested persons can find electronic versions of the documents by clicking on "[[Submit an intervention or view related documents](#)]" at the top of this notice.

58. Documents are available upon request during normal business hours by contacting:

Documentation Centre  
[Examinationroom@crtc.gc.ca](mailto:Examinationroom@crtc.gc.ca)

Client Services  
Toll-free telephone: 1-877-249-2782  
Toll-free TTY: 1-877-909-2782

Secretary General

# Appendix to Telecom Notice of Consultation CRTC 2026-47

## Questions for discussion

In March 2023, the Commission launched the Broadband Fund policy review. The first phase of the policy review resulted in a new policy for the Broadband Fund (hereafter, the new Broadband Fund policy), published in *Broadband Fund policy review – New policy for funding capital projects*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-328, 12 December 2024 (Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328). In the new Broadband Fund policy, the Commission focused on streamlining and improving the process for funding capital projects. This included improvements to help reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants and increase requirements for community engagement and consent by Indigenous communities.

In Appendix 1 of Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, the Commission provided a complete list of the specific policy items in the new Broadband Fund policy, including details on project types and related eligibility and assessment criteria.

The Commission is seeking comments from interested persons and parties on the topics set out above, the questions set out below, and any other area of the Broadband Fund that can be modified to reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants with the goal of helping to close the connectivity gap for Indigenous communities.

If you provided prior comments on any suggested changes to the Broadband Fund policy as part of another proceeding, please indicate if you would like those comments added to the record of this proceeding.

### Section A: Definitions and identification

Participants in early engagement sessions considered that terminology plays an important role in accurately representing individuals and communities. They also considered it beneficial for those directly affected to participate in defining the terms used to describe them because this can help ensure relevance and accuracy. The Commission is therefore looking to understand your perspective on the following questions.

Q1. In the new Broadband Fund policy, an Indigenous applicant to the Broadband fund is defined as:

- a for-profit or non-profit organization that is at least 51% owned and controlled by Indigenous peoples;
- a band council within the meaning of section 2 of the *Indian Act*; or,
- an Indigenous government authority established by a self-government agreement or a comprehensive land claim agreement.

Are there any elements that should be changed or added to the above definition to more accurately identify Indigenous applicants? For Indigenous participants, please feel free to draw from your cultural background, beliefs, community values, and lived experience in providing your view.

Q2. The Commission invites applicants to the Broadband Fund to self-identify as Indigenous for the purpose of benefiting from measures intended to help advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. How should self-identification be incorporated into the Indigenous stream? Please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section B, subsection 9 \(Application process – Self-identification of Indigenous applicants\)](#).

Q3. When considering the eligibility of an organization as an Indigenous applicant, should the Commission rely on the applicant's registration with or certification by an independent third-party organization to confirm Indigenous majority ownership and control? If so, which organization(s)?

Q4. Should a project be eligible for funding if the applicant is composed of multiple entities (such as a partnership or consortium) but only one member of the partnership or consortium is Indigenous? Should there be consideration of whether the resulting network will (i) be owned or controlled by and/or (ii) benefit an Indigenous community? Please refer to the Applicant eligibility criterion – Eligible applicant types and roles and responsibilities, outlined in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section C, subsection 4 \(General eligibility criteria – Applicant eligibility – Eligible applicant types and roles and responsibilities\)](#).

Q5. Are there any additional definitions in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1](#) that should be included or updated in the new Broadband Fund policy? Please share why these definitions are important, how they could impact Indigenous applicants seeking funding, and how they could be updated.

## **Section B: Application process**

In the new Broadband Fund policy, the Commission set out the process for applicants to apply for funding. The Commission is seeking suggestions on possible ways to tailor the application process to better meet the needs of Indigenous applicants and facilitate more Indigenous participation, with the goal of helping to close the connectivity gap for Indigenous communities. Please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section B \(Application process\)](#).

Q6. The Commission currently launches periodic calls for applications, each with a fixed submission period that is defined when the call for applications is launched. Are there aspects of the Commission's approach to launching calls for applications that could be adapted to better meet the needs of Indigenous applicants, such as extending the submission period? Please describe how an adapted process could be structured and implemented. Please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section B, subsections 1 to 3 \(Application process – Calls for applications, Deadline for each call for applications, Frequency of calls for applications\)](#).

Q7. In the new Broadband Fund policy, the Commission included the following improvements to help reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants (please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section B, subsection 10 \[Application process – Reducing barriers for Indigenous applicants\]](#)):

- when selecting projects for funding, giving special consideration to projects proposed by Indigenous applicants that would provide service to Indigenous communities;
- providing funding for up to two years of technical training for local Indigenous staff in Indigenous communities that the Indigenous applicant proposes to serve as part of a capital project;
- exempting Indigenous funding recipients from the requirement to provide other service providers with retail and wholesale open access to their funded transport infrastructure;
- providing up to 15% of funding (to a maximum of \$750,000) up front for Indigenous funding recipients; and
- eliminating the 10% holdback requirement for Indigenous funding recipients for projects with approved funding of \$5 million or less.

Should these or any other aspects of the new Broadband Fund policy be further tailored to better support Indigenous applicants? If so, please explain which one(s), and how they could be changed.

Q8. Have you previously applied to the Broadband Fund? If so, what was your experience with the program? What challenges did you face?

### **Section C: Evaluation of applications – Eligibility and assessment criteria**

The evaluation of applications for funding from the Broadband Fund takes place in three stages. First, the Commission considers whether an application meets certain eligibility criteria; applications that do not meet the criteria will not be considered. Second, the Commission evaluates proposed projects based on certain assessment criteria to identify a set of selectable projects. Third, from the set of selectable projects identified, the Commission selects projects for funding based on certain project selection considerations. This section looks at the first two stages; selection considerations are covered in the next section.

Q9. Should existing Broadband Fund eligibility and assessment criteria be modified for the Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund? If so, please identify which criteria should be modified, why they should be modified, and how they should be modified for Indigenous applicants. Please refer to the list of eligibility and assessment criteria outlined in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, sections [C \(General eligibility criteria\)](#), [D \(General assessment criteria\)](#), [E \(Universal service objective projects and project-specific eligibility and assessment criteria\)](#), and [F \(Satellite-dependent community projects and project-specific eligibility and assessment criteria\)](#).

Q10. To be eligible to receive funding from the Broadband Fund, an applicant must provide evidence of notification and outreach efforts to demonstrate that it has contacted all communities that will be served by the proposed project or that are located where the proposed infrastructure will be built. An applicant must demonstrate that it has contacted each community before the application deadline and has invited community representatives to respond.

Early and respectful outreach to all affected communities is essential, especially when working with Indigenous communities. Where appropriate, applicants should take a distinctions-based approach and engage with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis groups in a way that reflects their unique rights and circumstances. To be eligible for Broadband Fund support, applicants must:

- identify all communities affected by the project, clearly noting which are Indigenous;
- provide evidence of outreach and invitations to engage before the application deadline; and
- assess and document any potential impacts on Aboriginal or treaty rights, including how those impacts were considered and addressed.

Should the Commission modify the current approach to outreach and engagement efforts? Should any related assessment criteria in the second stage of the application evaluation process be modified and, if so, how? Please refer to the current approach to outreach and engagement efforts outlined in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, [Section C, subsection 9 \(General eligibility criteria – Project eligibility – Outreach\)](#) and [Section D, subsection 6 \(General assessment criteria – Assessment criterion – Engagement\)](#).

Q11. An applicant may propose to provide service and/or build infrastructure in an Indigenous community. In either of these cases, the applicant must provide evidence of consent from the representatives of the Indigenous community before the Commission provides its final funding approval. In these circumstances, the Commission may issue a conditional funding decision requiring the applicant to provide proof of consent from the representatives of the Indigenous community before it issues the final funding decision.

Should the Commission modify the current approach to requiring consent from representatives of Indigenous communities? Should any related assessment criteria in the second stage of the application evaluation process be modified and, if so, how? Please refer to the current approach to consent for infrastructure to be built in Indigenous communities outlined in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section D, subsection 6 \(General assessment criteria – Assessment criterion – Engagement\)](#).

Q12. Many interveners in the policy review proceeding and most participants in early engagement sessions highlighted the financial barriers for Indigenous-owned and -led telecommunications projects. They recommended developing funding models that provide long-term financial sustainability and support for Indigenous-owned networks.

Are there any additional costs that should be eligible for funding for Indigenous applicants to help ensure the success of their project? Please refer to the list of eligible and ineligible costs outlined in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section C, subsections 12 and 13 \(General eligibility criteria – Eligible costs, Ineligible costs\)](#).

Q13. An applicant must propose to build or upgrade infrastructure in an eligible geographic area. When the Commission issues a call for applications, it will identify the eligible geographic area(s) for each eligible project type.

The Commission currently uses information provided by telecommunications service providers to determine areas that are underserved (see Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's [National Broadband Map](#)) and are eligible for funding. How should the Commission determine geographic eligibility for funding for Indigenous communities? What other sources of data and what eligibility and assessment criteria should the Commission use to determine whether an Indigenous community is underserved and eligible for funding?

#### **Section D: Evaluation of applications – Selection considerations**

Once the Commission has identified a group of projects suitable for funding based on its evaluations against the eligibility and assessment criteria, it will use defined considerations to select a subset of these projects for funding. In deciding among a group of projects identified as suitable for funding, the Commission will consider whether individual projects could contribute to meeting the universal service objective and which projects would have the most positive impact on people living in Canada. The Commission will also give special consideration to the efficient use of funds.

Q14. When selecting a subset of projects for funding, the Commission may give special consideration to (i) selecting projects in multiple regions of Canada; (ii) project type; and (iii) social considerations (e.g., projects proposed by Indigenous applicants, projects that would serve Indigenous communities, or projects that would serve official language minority communities). Should these selection considerations be modified? Are there any additional selection considerations that the Commission should consider when deciding which projects to fund under the Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund? Please refer to the selection considerations outlined in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section G, subsections 2 to 5 \(Selection considerations – Efficient use of funds, Projects in multiple regions of Canada, Project type, and Social considerations\)](#).

#### **Section E: Funding conditions**

The Commission manages all stages of the funding process, from evaluating applications and selecting projects for funding, to monitoring completed projects to determine whether each recipient is fulfilling the funding conditions and delivering services as approved.

In the new Broadband Fund policy, the Commission streamlined the funding process to offer greater transparency and certainty to applicants, lessen the administrative burden, and reduce duplication of

effort. Please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section I, subsections 1 to 10 \(Funding conditions\)](#). Streamlining measures include:

- reducing the amount of information required at all stages of the funding process, from application to project completion; and
- making the funding distribution and claims reporting process easier for funding recipients by, for example, consolidating two separate recipients reports into one report.

Q15. Funding conditions are conditions that each applicant must meet before the construction or upgrade of a proposed network or service. Each funding recipient must meet these conditions during and after the construction or upgrade of a proposed network service. These conditions relate to items such as project timelines, reporting, auditing, material changes, etc.

Are there any funding conditions that should be modified? If so, please identify which conditions should be modified, why they should be modified, and how they should be modified. Please refer to the list of funding conditions outlined in [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section I, subsections 1 to 6 \(Funding conditions – General, Imposing requirements on funding recipients and enforcing those requirements, Publishing/setting out funding conditions for applicants and funding recipients, Requirement to meet external standards and/or guidelines for construction of projects, Project start and completion dates, and Final funding decision – Statement of work approval\)](#).

Q16. Reporting requirements occur after a project has been approved for funding and include quarterly progress reports and a completion report. These documents are required from all funding recipients at different stages of the project. Please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section I, subsections 7 to 10 \(Funding conditions – Reporting – General, Reporting – Notification of project completion date and submission of project completion report, Other reporting requirements, and Reporting – Claim reports\)](#).

Are there any Broadband Fund reporting requirements that should be modified for the Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund? If so, please identify which criteria should be modified, why they should be modified, for example, to respect and acknowledge cultural practices for Indigenous funding recipients, and how they should be modified to improve the funding stage for Indigenous applicants.

Q17. Are there other funding programs with reporting requirements that you would like to see incorporated into the Broadband Fund policy? If so, which program(s), what were the reporting requirements, and what did you like about those requirements?

- (a) If you have experience with the Broadband Fund, have you had any challenges with the reporting requirements? If yes, please explain the challenges that you have experienced and provide any suggestions you may have to reduce these challenges.

## Section F: Distribution of funding

The Broadband Fund's funding distribution model and claims reimbursement process balances providing access to funding for a wide variety of funding recipients and project types, while mitigating the risk of recipients not complying with requirements and projects not being completed.

Q18. Are there any considerations related to the funding distribution model (including, for example, the frequency of funding payments) that should be modified for the Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund? If so, please identify which aspects of the model should be modified, why they should be modified, and how they should be modified to improve the distribution of funding for Indigenous applicants. Please refer to [Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, Appendix 1, Section J, subsections 1 to 3 \(Distribution of funding – Frequency of funding payments – General, Frequency of funding payments – Operational costs for satellite-dependent community projects, and Holdback\)](#).

### Related documents

- *Accessibility and accommodations guidelines*, Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2025-95, 14 May 2025
- *Broadband Fund policy review – New policy for funding capital projects*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-328, 12 December 2024
- *Filing submissions for Commission proceedings in accessible formats*, Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2015-242, 8 June 2015
- *Filing of joint supporting interventions*, Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2011-693, 8 November 2011
- *Guidelines on the CRTC Rules of Practice and Procedure*, Broadcasting and Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2010-959, 23 December 2010