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The Department of the Interior has asked Congress for legislation that would make Indian tribes eligible to receive planning help under the Urban Planning Assistance Program of the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

The program is administered under Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954 which authorizes grants to State planning agencies for the provision of planning assistance to smaller cities, counties and other local units of government.

“Indian tribes are not included as the law now stands. "Indian tribes on reservations are in fact units of local government," the Department pointed out, "although not political subdivisions of the States, and we know of no reason for excluding them from the Urban Planning Assistance Program."

The Department added that Congress has explicitly made Indian tribes eligible for assistance under other similar statutes such as the Area Redevelopment Act, the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, and the Public Works Acceleration Act.

Normally such grants cover two-thirds of the total planning cost. Under the proposed bill, however, grants could be increased to three-fourths of the total planning cost if the reservation is located in a designated redevelopment area under Section 5 of the Area Redevelopment Act.