

Indian Affairs, Tribal Electrification Program

Ranking Criteria and Application Process

INTRODUCTION

The Tribal Electrification Program, funded through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, aims to support Federally recognized Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in implementing zero-emissions electrification projects in Tribal communities. The program seeks to address the critical need for access to reliable and sustainable electricity while promoting economic development, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience in Indian Country.

This guidance applies to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 award cycle. Additional guidance is subject to modification for future fiscal years.

This document:

1. Sets forth the application process for Tribes to carry out activities under IRA Sec. 80003; and
2. Describes requirements for executing and reporting on the activities involved in Tribal Electrification projects funded by this program.

The Justice40 Initiative¹ set the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged (or Justice40) communities, including Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Villages. Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal entities, regardless of whether they have land or not, are eligible to benefit from the Justice40 Initiative. The Tribal Electrification Program is a Justice40 covered program. All Justice40 covered programs are required to engage in stakeholder consultation and ensure community stakeholders are meaningfully involved in determining program benefits. The Justice40 Initiative also promotes meaningful engagement to ensure Tribes, stakeholders and communities are involved in determining program benefits. The Department is committed to respecting Tribal sovereignty and to ensuring government-to-government consultation on federal policies and activities.

All Federally Recognized Tribes and Federally Recognized Tribal entities are recognized as disadvantaged for the purpose of this funding opportunity. In addition, and to the extent this may be relevant, all census tracts identified as disadvantaged by CEQ's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) will be recognized as disadvantaged for the purpose of this funding opportunity.

¹ See OMB, CEQ, & CPO, M-21-28, Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, M-23-09 (July 20, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/M-21-28.pdf>; OMB, CEQ, & CPO, M-23-09, Addendum to the Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, M-21-28, on using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) (Jan. 27, 2023), https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/M-23-09_Signed_CEQ_CPO.pdf.

The Department consulted with Tribal Leaders on this guidance in December 2022 and to the extent possible under statute, incorporated into the final guidance recommendations and feedback received through the consultation process.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to Federally recognized Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations authorized by Indian Tribal governments (Tribes and Tribal Organizations as defined in [25 U.S.C. 5304\(e\)](#) to include Alaska Natives and ANCs), Tribal coalitions, and Tribal entities (as defined in Memorandum [M-23-09](#)).

Preference will be given to:

- Tribes with higher poverty (see Definitions),
- Tribes with fewer resources and less expertise to develop electrification projects at community or individual home levels, and
- Tribes with potential to implement community scale projects.

PERMISSIBLE USES

Successful applications will be limited to projects for:

1. the provision of electricity to unelectrified Tribal homes through zero-emissions energy systems.
2. transitioning electrified Tribal homes to zero-emissions energy systems; and
3. associated home repairs and retrofitting necessary to install the zero-emissions energy systems under (1) and (2).

Funding is available for one of three purposes:

- *Planning* – Please see “Definitions” section below.
- *Implementation* – Please see “Definitions” section below.
- *Both planning and implementation* – Projects that include elements of both planning and implementation descriptions. A request for planning dollars and implementation dollars will be accepted with a viable budget and a clear request within the application.

Restrictions on funding use

Any use of funding outside the immediate electrification project proposed is restricted. All funds provided under agreements entered into pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act shall be treated as non-Federal funds for purposes of meeting matching requirements under any other Federal or non-Federal Program.

Non-federal funds may be allocated to appropriation accounts for contractor services authorized by Tribal governments or councils that include the usage of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), in accordance

with Federal Aviation Administration regulations and project aviation safety plans in order to conduct aerial surveys for development of electrification projects. The Secretary shall not revise, amend, or require additional terms in a new or subsequent funding agreement without the consent of the Indian Tribe, unless such terms are required by Federal law.

Please note: Construction provisions for a self-governance Tribe state that Tribe can select the Title I- 25 U.S.C. 5324 (m) construction process or select and meet the negotiated requirements of 25 U.S.C. 5367.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications may be submitted starting May 01, 2024. All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. EST, June 30, 2024.

All interested parties are invited to apply with a complete application as outlined below. Applications should include all required elements, clearly address applicant eligibility, and alignment of proposal with permissible uses. Applications are **limited to 30 pages, not including letters of support and letters of contributions**). Applications should be submitted electronically, including all required documentation as identified in Required Elements, saved as a file in PDF format and emailed to electrification@bia.gov, by 11:59 p.m. EST June 30, 2024.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR APPLICATIONS

To be complete, applications must include sufficient details to provide assurances regarding the ability of the applicant to carry out and oversee the activities to be funded. Technical assistance will be available to support development of the proposal prior to submission, as needed (please see “Technical Assistance” section below).

Applications must include:

- A. Introduction, Background and Abstract – name of applicant, project name, project location (precise geographical indicators of the physical location of the project, such as address or latitude/longitude), a brief background and description of the issue the project will address. This section should include a paragraph summarizing the electrification request as well as identify if the funding will be used for Planning, Implementation, or both (please see “definitions” section below).
- B. Contact information for the Tribal project manager overseeing the project.
- C. Tribal Resolution providing approval of the proposed project. If Tribal coalitions are applying, a resolution from each Tribe is required.
- D. Federal Forms: The following Federal forms must be completed and submitted as part of the request for funding (the application).
 - i. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance (version 4)-
https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424_4_0-V4.0.pdf
 - ii. SF-424A Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs-

<https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424A-V1.0.pdf>

An SF-424A is a standard form that provides an estimate of the work's major cost centers (e.g., Tribal employee labor, training, equipment, contracting and other operational costs), where the sum-total of the budget justification equals the overall grant request.

- iii. Budget Narrative – Provide a detailed line-item estimated expenditure project breakdown including other sources of committed funds, if applicable. Contract Support Costs will be considered but will not be directly identified as part of the project budget and should be excluded from the sum-total of the budget.
 - iv. SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.
- E. Demonstration of Needs and Resources - Applicants are responsible for demonstrating poverty levels, burdens, and limited resources for the communities affected by the proposed projects. Applications should specify which categories of burden are experienced in the community (e.g. low income, high unemployment or underemployment, linguistic isolation, high housing or energy costs) and should include documentation of the data source demonstrating the identified burden(s). The relationship of how the proposed project is expected to provide benefits that address the burdens should be established. Financial resources or lack thereof, should be provided to provide a more comprehensive picture of community needs. Data from local sources can be used to support community need (refer to the "Performance Management" section below for additional information).
- F. Work Plan containing the following information:
1. A description of—
 - i. the Tribal program for electrification, planning, retrofitting or upgrading, including how the Tribe expects to find, or is aware of the need for upgrades or retrofitting, legal authorities, processes used to identify and prioritize procurement mechanisms, and other program elements demonstrating the readiness of the grantee to carry out proposed activities using the proposed funding.
 - ii. the activities to be carried out with the proposed funding, and
 - iii. Applications including "Implementation" must also include the following information:
 1. Implementation Methodology – describe the plan to accomplish the project. Include a timeline for completion of tasks.
 2. Outline a mechanism for reporting progress towards milestone metrics for the program. Milestone metrics could include some or all of the following:
 - a. Number of zero-emissions energy generation systems installed.
 - b. Total running feet of power line constructed.
 - c. Number of homes repaired or retrofitted to make them capable of utilizing zero-emissions energy systems.
 - d. Number of homes successfully electrified.
 3. If personnel are to be hired using this funding, what is the Tribe's plan to fund those personnel when the window to obligate funding expires after five years.
 2. An estimate of—
 - i. the number of homes to be electrified from a currently unelectrified state, the number of homes to be upgraded, and the number of homes to be retrofitted

- with proposed funding.
 - ii. the number of jobs to be created or saved through the activities to be funded under this funding mechanism; and
 - iii. the amount of funds to be spent on administrative costs will be defined in contract support costs, this should be separated from the overall project budget.
3. Description of how the Tribe will engage with other Federal or State agencies.
 4. The Tribe's authorities to enter private property, or a Tribe's procedures to obtain landowner consent to enter private property, in the event any lines will be accessed from privately owned property.
 5. A work schedule covering the period of performance of the funding.

Applications should include, if applicable:

- A. Letters of support and letters of contribution from other agencies and partnering organizations.
- B. A plan to educate homeowners on the benefits of the proposed transition to zero-emissions energy systems necessary to accomplish the program (if the project requires an opt in from individual homeowners).
- C. A federally approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or statement regarding Tribe's intention to negotiate or utilize the de minimis rate.

Additionally:

- Budgets cannot include Tribal indirect rate. Tribal contract support cost is drawn from a separate account and should be requested at budget development meetings with BIA contracting officials (if selected for funding).
- All applications must be signed (at a minimum) by a Tribal official who is equivalent to the Director of the Office of Indian Economic Development (OIED) to signify the Tribe is aware of the funding and program requirements.
- Participants are encouraged to utilize the PL 93-638 Self Determination or Self Governance Act of 1994 contract process to facilitate project reporting and support of the Tribal Electrification Program funding.
- IA believes in supporting projects that are transparent, accountable, and demonstrate measurable impact. We strongly encourage you to incorporate data, performance, and storytelling elements into your proposal. Please refer to the "Performance Management" section below for more information.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The intention of this funding is to provide a transformational opportunity for communities that would be unable to accomplish the goals of this program independently. Applications must demonstrate, at minimum, one of the following:

- The requested funding will directly support electrification of unelectrified homes. The community has low levels of households with zero-emissions electricity.
- The community is at high level of risk from climate change or actively planning community driven relocation and if the applicant’s community is actively integrating electrification into their climate change resilience or community driven relocation planning (if applicable).
- The community has higher levels of poverty (see Definitions).
- The community has limited potential to implement zero-emissions Tribal electrification projects without this funding and can describe the potential for how this funding would provide for transformational change for the Tribe.).

Applications will be evaluated based on:

Category	Weight
Community Need, Community Risks, and Estimated Community Impact	30%
Permissible Use Compliance and Existing Community Burdens	20%
Community Readiness and Existing Plans	15%
Land Identification and existing housing stock impacted	15%
Workforce development opportunities	10%
Access to other funding resources including partnership opportunities	10%

Other ranking criteria include:

- The number of households in need of basic repairs or retrofits to safely receive electrification.
- The number of unelectrified households to receive electrification.
- The number of households to transition from electricity to zero-emissions electricity.
- The degree of benefit to the Tribal community or communities (i.e., 25% of the community will benefit from this funding request).
- The degree to which the project meets the goals, objectives, and requirements of approved Tribal or Federal and State planning documents.
- The extent to which a project engages Tribal workforce development in electrification project implementation.
- The extent to which the project includes additional committed Federal, State, or Private financial resources.

REQUIRED REPORTING

Successful applicants must commit to providing an annual report to the Regional BIA point-of-contact with a copy submitted to electrification@bia.gov, where reports should be submitted by August 1st of each year until the project is completed.

Reports must include:

- Project Status
- Expenditure Report and Narrative must include:
 - Milestones achieved according to the submitted and agreed upon workplan.
 - The number of households that received basic repairs or retrofits to safely receive electrification to date.
 - The number of unelectrified households that received electrification to date.
 - The number of households that transitioned from electricity to zero-emissions electricity to date.
 - The degree of benefit to the Tribal community or communities (i.e., 25% of the community will benefit from this funding request) to date.
 - The extent to which a project engaged Tribal workforce development in electrification project implementation to date.
 - Accounting records that support contract expenditures on a quarterly and annual basis
- Budget Request and narrative must be submitted for additional drawdown(s).
- Expected completion date.

A final report to the designated technical assistance contact (listed below) is required within 90 days of project completion. Reporting helps support future appropriations.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Tribal Electrification Program will coordinate financial and technical assistance to applicants to increase the number of Tribal homes with zero-emissions electricity. Technical assistance is available to applicants and funding recipients in the following areas: proposal preparation, project management, contract management, and related administrative topics. All technical assistance will be in the form of training or consultation through, among others, the Office of Indian Economic Development.

To request technical assistance, send an email to Electrification@bia.gov and in the subject line please state, "TA Request: Tribe/Organization Name."

The Department is working with multiple federal agencies to ensure we are accessing all Federal resources that can provide support and fill gaps where needed for the Tribal Electrification Program. As a team, we will provide technical assistance to applicants as needed. The Department is highly focused on maximizing the benefits of the Tribal Electrification Program as the goal of electrifying as many unelectrified homes in Indian Country is critical. Furthermore, this guidance advances the Biden Administration's priorities of investing public dollars efficiently and equitably and promoting Tribal job creation, which are all a part of the drive to build and strengthen our energy infrastructure on Tribal lands.

DEFINITIONS

"Community readiness" – how prepared the Tribal community is to implement an electrification project.

"Contract Support costs" are those costs that cannot be directly attributed to electrification, but instead to general project management or program administration. Contract Support Costs can be expended for

personnel or non-personnel costs, and can be direct or indirect, but should represent the costs to the Tribe for managing the overall project-funded work rather than preparation for and execution of individual projects.

“Date of receipt of funds” - as identified as the effective date of the proposed funding and the start of its period of performance, as determined by the DOI Awarding Official and the receiving Tribe.

“Electrification” - The provision of providing electricity to unelectrified Tribal homes through zero-emissions energy systems, (1) deploying integrated energy system(s) to operate independent of the traditional centralized electric power grid; or (2) deploying energy infrastructure to connect Tribal homes to the traditional centralized electric power grid.

“Energy Infrastructure” for purposes of this FOA, means electric power distribution technologies to transport electricity from the transmission system to individual consumers and may include, but is not limited to, distribution substations, circuits, circuit breakers, switchgear, busbars, distribution lines, distribution transformers, capacitors, voltage regulators, meters, and utility poles.

“Higher poverty” - Higher levels of poverty is defined as having an average combined household income that does not exceed 150% of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Poverty Income Guidelines (published annually in January) (25 CFR 256.9-.11).

“Implementation” in the context of the Tribal Electrification Program is defined as the process of putting the planned activities into action or executing the various stages of the electrification project, such as installing electrical infrastructure, deploying power sources and ensuring the availability of electricity to the Tribal communities. Implementation aims to turn the funding and planning into tangible results to bring electricity access and benefits to the Tribal areas.

“Indian Tribe” is any Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

“Partnerships” – any professional relationship where both parties are working towards the same goal of electrification of the proposed Tribal community.

“Planning” in the context of the Tribal Electrification Program is defined as the development of a strategy to transition electrified Tribal homes to zero-emissions energy systems. Planning activities are acceptable uses of TEP funds when those plans are directly related to that transition, and the connection must be justified in the proposal.

“Stand-Alone (Isolated) Microgrid” means a local electrical grid with defined electrical boundaries, acting as a single and controllable entity, that only operates autonomously from the traditional centralized electric power grid.

“Traditional Centralized Electric Power Grid,” for the purposes of this guidance, refers to the main power grids in the continental United States: (1) the Eastern Interconnected System (Eastern

Interconnect); (2) the Western Interconnected System (Western Interconnect); and (3) the Texas Interconnected System (Texas Interconnect); as well as (4) the interconnected grid system in Alaska that connects Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Kenai Peninsula.

“Tribal land” is defined in Sec. 40601(a)(6) as any land or interest in land owned by an Indian Tribe, the title to which is (A) held in trust by the United States, or (B) subject to a restriction against alienation under Federal law. This includes plugging, abandonment, and reclamation of wells drilled into minerals that are held in trust or restricted status for a Tribe, even if the surface estate is not; and remediation of surface that is held in trust or restricted status for a Tribe, even if the minerals are not.

“Unelectrified” means Tribal home(s) and Tribal member’s home(s) that are (1) not connected to the traditional centralized electric power grid and (2) not connected to a stand-alone (isolated) microgrid that operates autonomously from the traditional centralized electric power grid. This includes new residential development and existing residential developments.

“Zero-Emissions” refers to energy systems that do not emit greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide or methane. Common forms of zero-emissions energy generation include solar power, wind power, and hydroelectric power.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

IA believes in supporting projects that are transparent, accountable, and demonstrate measurable impact. We strongly encourage you to incorporate data, performance, and storytelling elements into your proposal. This information helps IA understand the need, potential impact, and effectiveness of your project, as well as providing IA the ability to demonstrate unmet Tribal needs when justifying future program funding. Incorporating these elements increases your chances of receiving an award and provides you with a roadmap to execute your project, ultimately resulting in a more successful project.

Data:

- **Quantify the problem:** Use relevant data and statistics to clearly define the issue your project addresses and the community that is impacted. Use available statistics, reports, research findings, or local/regional data to illustrate the need.
 - Example: Instead of stating "Many Tribal homes lack access to electricity," quantify the issue with data like "According to a 2023 Tribal energy needs assessment, 20% of homes on the [Reservation Name] lack access to reliable electricity, impacting [number] residents."
 - Note: We recognize that complete data sets regarding specific needs to your community may not always be available. Proposals will not be penalized for data gaps beyond your control. Our focus is on identifying strong proposals that demonstrate a clear understanding of the problem you aim to address, even if comprehensive data isn't available. We encourage you to identify known data gaps in your proposal and if feasible, propose solutions for future data collection.
- **Plan for data collection:** Outline your plan for gathering relevant data throughout the duration of your project. The plan should include the types of data, how you will collect it, frequency of collection, how you will ensure its quality, and any planned data analysis.

- Example: Explain how you will gather data through household surveys, interviews, and existing Tribal reports, ensuring data accuracy through culturally appropriate outreach methods and data verification with Tribal leadership.
- **Leverage data for decision-making:** Describe how you will use data to inform key project decisions and track progress towards your goals.
 - Example: Describe how you will use data on energy needs, available renewable resources, and community preferences to select appropriate green energy solutions and adjust installation plans as needed, while tracking progress with metrics like the number of homes electrified and the types of renewable energy systems installed.

Performance:

- **Set “SMART” goals:** SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Establish clear SMART goals aligned with the program objectives and supported by data.
 - Example: Set a SMART goal like "Electrify 75% of unelectrified homes on the [Reservation Name] with solar power systems within two years, as measured by completed installations and verified by Tribal energy officials."
- **Track progress with KPIs:** Develop a performance measurement plan with key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor your progress towards objectives. Your KPIs should align with the goals and objectives of your project. Clearly define the metrics you will use to assess progress and ensure the metrics are feasible given your data collection plan. Regularly tracking KPIs will provide valuable insights throughout implementation of your project and allow you to make data-driven decisions to optimize impact.
 - Example: Identify KPIs like the number of solar panels installed, the increase in electricity access for Tribal members, and the reduction in reliance on fossil fuels. Outline how you will collect and analyze this data regularly in collaboration with Tribal partners.
- **Adapt and improve:** Explain how you will use performance data to adapt your project activities and ensure optimal effectiveness. We understand that challenges and opportunities may arise throughout your project, and therefore encourage you to demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and improvement through evidence-building.
 - Example: Explain how you will collect, analyze, and utilize feedback from various sources. Discuss areas where feedback could be particularly valuable (e.g., adapting installation methods, addressing community concerns), and demonstrate your commitment to using that feedback to continuously improve project effectiveness and deliver the best possible outcomes for the community.

Storytelling:

- **Sharing a compelling narrative:** Explain how you will share stories that describes your project, its goals, and the positive impact it has or will have on the community. This is an opportunity to get creative and integrate culturally relevant and meaningful mediums to showcase the real-life impact of your project.
 - Example: Media such as blog posts, podcasts, videos, photo essays, and infographics along with data such as those collected from surveys, focus groups, and interviews are great methods to demonstrate project impacts. These types of activities demonstrate project importance while resonating with the audience.

- **Focus on the human element:** Highlight the individuals and communities who will benefit from your work, adding a personal touch to your proposal. Meaningful data is not only limited to numbers and statistics. Incorporating information that speaks to how your program has impacted or improved the lives of people is important.
 - Examples: Feature quotes and testimonials from Tribal members expressing their desire for clean energy and their gratitude for the project's support. Or share the story of an elder struggling with access to clean energy and how your project will bring light and opportunity to their home, improving their overall quality of life and preserving cultural traditions.
- **Integrate data and performance metrics:** Use data and evidence to support your narrative and make it more impactful and convincing.
 - Example: Weave data points such as the number of homes electrified, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, air quality improvements, economic benefits for the community, or other benefits to the community into your narrative to demonstrate the project's tangible impact.

Additional Resources and Support:

- **Technical Assistance:** We offer technical assistance to help applicants incorporate these elements into their proposals. Don't hesitate to reach out for support, as described in the "Technical Assistance" section above.