



National Congress of American Indians

NCAI News

September 17, 2001
(Broadcast #381)

Administration on Aging Grants Available – The Administration on Aging (AOA) within the Department of Health and Human Services has announced the availability of two grants. The first is a grant available to Tribes is for grants for Native American Caregiver programs. Tribes who provide financial support to families giving care to elders may be eligible for this program. The second grant is to Indian Tribal organizations for supportive and nutritional services to older Indians. Tribes who have the ability to provide nutritional services to Elders may apply. For more information, please contact Yvonne Jackson, Office for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Programs; AOA; DHHS; Cohen Building, Room 4743; 330 Independence Ave, SW; Washington, DC 20201; telephone 202.619.2713, fax 202.260.1012, email: Yvonne.Jackson@aoa.gov.

FCC Seeks Comments on Expanding Universal Service Support – On September 5, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published a notice seeking comments on its definition of universal service, including whether to expand the types of telecommunications service eligible for support.

The FCC's universal service programs are intended to ensure that consumers in all regions of the nation have access to telecommunications services at affordable and reasonably comparable rates. There are currently four universal service programs, each designed to address a specific category of universal service needs. The high-cost program provides support for telephone service in high-cost areas of the country. The low-income program provides support to enable low-income consumers to obtain and retain telephone service. The schools and libraries program provides support to assist schools and libraries in purchasing telecommunications and information services. The rural health care program provides support to assist rural health care providers in purchasing telecommunications and information services. These programs are open to all eligible application, including American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Currently, nine core services are eligible for universal service support: single-party service; voice grade access to the public switches telephone network; Dual Tone Multifrequency signaling or its functional equivalent; access to emergency services; access to operator services; access to interexchange services; access to directory assistance; and toll limitation services for qualifying low-income consumers.

The Federal-State Joint Board is seeking comments on whether any services (such as advanced or high-speed Internet access, expanded area services, intrastate or interstate toll services, or prepaid calling plans) should be added to or removed from this list, as well as

how those core services should be defined. According to the 1996 Act, the Joint Board and the FCC must consider the extent to which core services:

- ⊘ Are essential to education, public health, or public safety
- ⊘ Have, through the operation of market choices by customers, been subscribed to by a substantial majority of residential customers
- ⊘ Are being deployed in public telecommunications networks by telecommunications carriers
- ⊘ Are consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity

Comments are due on or before November 5, 2001. Reply comments are due on or before January 4, 2002. A copy of the complete FCC notice, which includes detailed information about the types of comments the Joint Board is seeking, and submission instructions, is available at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2001_register&docid=01-22182-filed.pdf.

For More Information, contact NCAI at 202.466.7767
