



Office of Regulatory Staff
1401 Main Street
Suite 900
Columbia, SC 29201
(803) 737-0800
ORS.SC.GOV

June 22, 2023

VIA U.S. CERTIFIED MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable William Harris
Chief, Catawba Indian Nation
996 Avenue of the Nations
Rock Hill, SC 29730

**RE: Request for Tribal Consultation
Internet Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act**

Dear Chief Harris:

With the support of Governor McMaster, the South Carolina Department of Administration (Admin), and the South Carolina Council on Minority Affairs (CMA), and on behalf of the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) and the South Carolina Broadband Office (SCBBO), I am writing to initiate Tribal Consultation on the federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) which was signed into law by President Biden in 2021 and is locally managed by ORS and administered by the SCBBO.

In preparation for IIJA funding which will likely become available to South Carolina in early 2025, the SCBBO is developing our Five-Year Broadband Plan and Initial Proposal which are due to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) by the end of 2024.

Of the IIJA funding (minimum of \$100 million) which is expected to be allocated to South Carolina, a portion may be used to fund tribal infrastructure and/or workforce needs. The ORS, Admin, CMA, and SCBBO are dedicated to expanding broadband deployment in unserved areas and promoting digital inclusion statewide.

The SCBBO is committed to holding consultation expeditiously to ensure that your input informs the Five-Year Broadband Plan as well as the use and timing of additional funding from IIJA. In accordance with the US Department of Commerce's Tribal consultation policy, I am inviting you and/or a Tribal representative with your delegation of authority to participate in a Tribal Consultation to provide your advice and insights as we are working through the critical issues related to the program.

I hope that one of the following dates would be convenient for a 60-to-90-minute visit to the Catawba Nation whereby my team and I can take part in the Tribal Consultation session:

- Thursday **July 6** between 9am and 12 noon; or,
- Friday **July 7** between 1 and 4pm; or,
- Monday **July 10** between 1 and 4pm.

If none of these days are suitable or you would prefer a virtual meeting, we will do everything possible to accommodate other options. That said, to meet our federal obligations, we would like to complete this Tribal Consultation by July 16, 2023.

Over time, IJA provides the possibility of funding for the following:

- Broadband infrastructure deployment, including support for unserved and underserved homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions
- Broadband Affordability Programs, including:
 - ✓ providing free or reduced-cost broadband service
 - ✓ preventing disconnection of existing broadband service
- Distance Learning & Telehealth
- Digital Inclusion Activities

Below are some of the questions on which the SCBBO seeks your input during this first consultation:

- What is the availability and quality of high-speed internet infrastructure on the Catawba Nation?
- How affordable are the current internet options? Are members of the Catawba Nation participating in the Federal Communication Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program which offers a subsidy of \$75/month for high-speed internet service?
- Would the Catawba Nation benefit from programs that demonstrate how to take full advantage of high-speed internet? If yes, what programs would be most useful?

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim Stritzinger, Director of the SCBBO at (803) 606-6398, or jstritzinger@ors.sc.gov or myself at 803-603-7810.

I look forward to our consultation and government-to-government engagement with the Catawba Nation as we work to close the digital divide. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Nanette S. Edwards
Executive Director

cc: Governor Henry E. McMaster
Marcia Adams, Executive Director, SC Department of Administration
Dr. Delores Dacosta, Executive Director, SC Commission for Minority Affairs