



Coushatta Heritage Department PO Box 10 Elton LA 70532



April 9, 2009

To: The National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Department of Commerce; and Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture

From: The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, submitted by Mr. Bertney Langley, Executive Administrator of the Coushatta Heritage Department, and Dr. Linda Langley, Research Professor of Anthropology at McNeese State University

Subject: Comments Pertaining to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Broadband Initiatives

Thank you for this opportunity to provide the following comments related to implementation of the Broadband Initiatives under the ARRA of 2009. Please feel free to contact us if we can provide additional information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana is a small, federally recognized Indian Tribe located in rural southwestern Louisiana. The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana has maintained a high degree of its traditional culture in large part due to its remote location; in particular, the majority of members over the age of 20 speak the tribal language, Koasati, as their first language. Concerned about recent trends towards language decline, the Tribe, in partnership with McNeese State University, applied for and received NSF funding in May 2007 under the Documenting Endangered Languages program (NSF award #0804096) to support a comprehensive language documentation project. The project has already been extremely successful, producing a 1200-word "talking dictionary" currently located within the Creek Language Archives, at <http://web.wm.edu/linguistics/coushatta/?svr=www>. The language documentation project has also produced a terabyte of data in digital audio, video, and textual format, with much more digital data to come. Data storage is now a key issue, as is bandwidth for data transmission (e.g., for web access to Koasati relational database, language lessons, streaming audio and video, etc.). The Tribe is attempting to resolve these issues by forming a partnership with the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative.

COMMENTS

The Coushatta Tribe concurs with the National Tribal Telecommunications Association's recommendation that Broadband funding priorities be targeted at communities lacking both infrastructure access and broadband services. The Tribe also concurs with the comments of Sacred Wind Enterprises concerning the role of States in selecting projects for funding; in the absence of published prioritization criteria, States should be recused from judging projects submitted by competing organizations. The Coushatta Tribe suggests that priority be given to proposals that demonstrate efficient leveraging of funding and resources, not those that simply leverage funds with other Recovery Act projects. The Tribe further recommends that priority consideration be given to regional distribution of funds, as previous infrastructure initiatives (e.g., Indian Education program, Telemedicine Pilot program, Distance Learning Telecommunications program, FCC Rural Broadband Infrastructure, Tribal Colleges and Universities, etc.) have had a disproportionately minimal impact in the southeast.