

April 1, 2021



Native Public Media
PO Box 3955
Flagstaff, Arizona. 86003

American Rescue Plan CPB Appropriation

Dear CPB ARP Advisory. Group:

As you know, Congress appropriated to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting “for fiscal year 2021, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, \$175,000,000, to remain available until expended, to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, including for fiscal stabilization grants to public telecommunications entities, as defined in section 397 of the Communications Act of 1934 ([47 U.S.C. 397](#)), with no deduction for administrative or other costs of the Corporation, to maintain programming and services and preserve small and rural stations threatened by declines in non-Federal revenues.”

During the last few weeks, my staff and I consulted with station managers from Community Service Grant (CSG) qualified stations and NPM’s Station Advisory Committee seeking their advice and input to help inform the development of a plan for the distribution of ARP funds to Native stations according to the language and intent of the ARP Act (ARP).

First, the ARP rightly distinguishes funding for the “prevention, preparation for, and responding to COVID-19.” Native Americans are among the populations hit hardest by COVID-19; and the battle against the coronavirus is not yet over. On March 30, 2021, the Navajo Nation released information about the first UK variant case on the Navajo reservation. The patient, a vaccinated individual, survived hospitalization, emphasizing the need for a more robust effort to inform the Native American public about the need to vaccinate against COVID-19 and raise the survival rate. Native Public Media, in concert with the thirty-six stations in the CSG program, launched a second wave of COVID-19 public information in the most extensive radio campaign to increase vaccination among Native Americans. ARP funds can help support this vaccination campaign and save lives through direct support to CSG stations, making the best use of our public airwaves to protect the public’s general welfare.

Secondly, the coronavirus exposed underlying fractures in Indian country's infrastructure, including health care and basic needs like water. Native Public Media submits that small and rural stations' communications infrastructure also needs attention polarized in an information-centric pandemic. Grants to public telecommunications entities for fiscal stabilization should include replacing radio hardware that is ready to be replaced due to age or repair. Radio hardware includes radio transmitters, backup power generators, studio boards, production equipment, and the like. While fiscal stabilization comes in many forms, one way to shore up the economic vitality of Native stations is to invest in equipment that will keep stations on-air during international crises and sustain the employment of essential station personnel. Since the elimination of the Department of Commerce's Public Telecommunications Facilities Program in 2011, no other federal funding is available to radio stations to replace expensive but necessary equipment and the associated engineering expertise.

Finally, funding to support programming and services that will preserve small and rural stations in a broken economy is critical. Stations that previously operated in challenging economic environments now find themselves in an impossible situation. A scarce economy is a struggle for essential services like media to operate within. Support for our stations' general operations is critical where the threat of revenue declines in non-federal funding support has all but disappeared.

On behalf of the Native radio stations in the CPB CSG program, I respectfully submit these recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Loris Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Loris Taylor
President and CEO
Native Public Media