



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

August 18, 2022

Dear Tribal Leaders,

On behalf of the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNAA), you are cordially invited to an interagency Tribal consultation on Wednesday, September 21, 2022, 2pm – 5pm EST, on the implementation of the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52), which was enacted as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58).

**BABA applies a new purchasing preference for American-made products that could significantly impact Tribal infrastructure projects.** It provides that “none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure, including each deficient program, may be obligated for a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States.”<sup>1</sup>

This provision **does not** apply to the P.L. 93-638 agreements that Tribes have with the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The consultation will be held virtually on Wednesday, September 21, 2022, from 2:00-5:00pm ET. Prior to this consultation, a virtual Tribal caucus session will be held from 1:00-2:00pm ET.

## Background

On April 18, 2022, the White House Office of Management and Budget released a Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on [Initial Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy America Preference in Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Infrastructure](#) (M-22-11). This Memorandum details new requirements enacted by law under the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (Public Law P.L. 117-58), requiring that non-emergency infrastructure financed directly (e.g., Federal grants) or indirectly (e.g., loan guarantees and other types of financial assistance) must be constructed using iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials which are produced in the United States.

Amongst these requirements, this Memorandum directs agencies to consult with tribes pursuant to Executive Order 13175. The White House Council on Native American Affairs facilitates inter-agency collaboration and coordination on Tribal issues, including consultation. Rather than agencies seeking Tribal input separately on BABA, the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNAA) is coordinating a joint Tribal consultation on this important issue.

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<sup>1</sup> “Made in America Laws” means all statutes, regulations, rules, and Executive Orders relating to Federal financial assistance awards or Federal procurement, including those that refer to “Buy America” or “Buy American,” that require, or provide a preference for, the purchase or acquisition of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States, including iron, steel, and manufactured products offered in the United States. Made in America Laws include laws requiring domestic preference for maritime transport, including the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (Pub. L. No. 66-261), also known as the Jones Act. Exec. Order No. 14,005, 86 Fed. Reg. 7475, § 2(b) (Jan. 28, 2021), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/28/2021-02038/ensuring-the-future-is-made-in-all-of-america-by-all-of-americas-workers>. Made in America Laws also include laws that give preference to Indian-owned and -controlled businesses, such as the Buy Indian Act (25 U.S.C. 47), that produce items in the United States.

## Agencies/Departments Jointly Consulting (With Link to BABA Site of Approved Waivers)

- [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA)
- [U.S. Department of Commerce](#), National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
- U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Native Americans (ANA)
- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD)
- [U.S. Department of the Interior](#) (DOI)
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

## Scope of Consultation

Under this law, agencies must require that grantees, cooperative agreement recipients, and (direct or guarantee) loan recipients use domestic iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials in each funded infrastructure project. Agencies are authorized under BABA to issue waivers for specific projects under certain circumstances. WHCNAA is hosting this consultation to better inform agencies on the scope of Tribal Nations' needs for infrastructure projects, the types of materials Tribes commonly use, whether Tribes source or offer covered materials, and how waivers should be structured where allowable by law.

## Registration

Tribal Caucus:

- **Date:** Wednesday, September 21, 2022
- **Time:** 1:00p.m. ET – 2:00p.m. ET
- **Register at:** [https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJItcO6ppjgoHc\\_V5wNsj\\_fmkdQAVRHSCk](https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJItcO6ppjgoHc_V5wNsj_fmkdQAVRHSCk)
- **Note:** Tribal caucus is an opportunity for Tribal leaders to discuss relevant BABA consultation issues without federal policymakers online.

Tribal Consultation:

- **Date:** Wednesday, September 21, 2022
- **Time:** 2:00p.m. ET – 5:00p.m. ET
- **Register at:** [https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN\\_Qcl\\_sy3bQwmD6dxmYiYkyA](https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_Qcl_sy3bQwmD6dxmYiYkyA)
- **Note:** Tribal leaders interested in participating in Tribal Caucus must also register for Tribal Consultation.

## Proxies

In the event you cannot attend and wish to send a proxy, please notify the White House Council on Native American Affairs by Wednesday, September 14, 2022, at [whcnaa@bia.gov](mailto:whcnaa@bia.gov).

To designate a proxy for this meeting, please copy the attached delegation form to Tribal letterhead. This delegation cannot be in perpetuity. You are also encouraged to bring program leadership and staff from your nation to the tribal consultation as observers.

## Written Comment

The White House Council on Native American Affairs encourages tribal leaders to submit written consultation remarks by Thursday, October 20, 2022, to [whcnaa@bia.gov](mailto:whcnaa@bia.gov).

**Questions**

Please contact [whcnaa@bia.gov](mailto:whcnaa@bia.gov) if you have any questions.

On behalf of the White House Council on Native American Affairs and participating agencies, we look forward to joining you for this consultation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Morgan Rodman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Anthony Morgan Rodman  
Executive Director, White House Council on Native American Affairs

**FRAMING PAPER:  
TRIBAL CONSULTATION ON BUILD AMERICA BUY AMERICA**

*hosted by the  
White House Council on Native American Affairs*

**Wednesday, September 21, 2022**

**Tribal Leader Caucus**  
1:00p.m. ET – 2:00p.m. ET

**Tribal Consultation**  
2:00p.m. – 5:00p.m. ET

**I. Consulting Agencies/Departments**

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
- U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Native Americans (ANA)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

**II. Background**

- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in November 2021, includes the “Build America, Buy America Act” (BABA).<sup>1</sup>
- Across all covered federal agencies, BABA requires that “none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure...may be obligated for a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States.”
- On April 18, 2022, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a [memorandum](#) to agencies on implementing BABA, including a requirement that agencies consult with tribal nations before applying BABA purchase preferences to covered programs affecting Tribal communities.
- The White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) recognizes ongoing tribal requests for increased inter-agency collaboration and coordination, including on consultations. Rather than federal agencies consulting with tribes separately, WHCNA invites Tribal Leaders to consult with the participating agencies in a joint, inter-agency consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. 117-57 § 70901-52

### III. Applicability

- This purchase preference applies to
  - **Types of Program Recipients:** non-Federal entities, including Tribal governments;
  - **Types of Federal Funding, Technical Assistance, or Donations:** grants, cooperative agreements, non-cash contributions or donations of property, direct assistance, loans, loan guarantees, and other types of financial assistance;
  - **Types of Infrastructure Projects:** projects including but not limited to structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems, including electric vehicle charging stations; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property; and
  - **Types of Products and Construction Materials:** For purposes of BABA, “construction materials” include an article, material, or supply— other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives— that is or consists primarily of:
    - non-ferrous metals;
    - plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and
    - polymers used in fiber optic cables);
    - glass (including optic glass);
    - lumber; or
    - drywall.
- This purchase preference **does not** apply to
  - **Pre- and Post- Disaster Response:** pre- and post- disaster or emergency response expenditures under certain provisions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.
  - **Non-infrastructure Projects:** programs or projects that do not include the development or expansion of aforementioned infrastructure projects.

### IV. Waivers

- BABA allows for three (3) different types of waivers in addition to general applicability waivers:<sup>2</sup>
  - **Public interest waivers,** when applying domestic procurement preference would be inconsistent with public interest.
  - **Nonavailability waiver,** when the types of iron, steel, manufactured products or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficiently and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality.

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<sup>2</sup> P.L. 117-57 § 70914(c)

- **Unreasonable cost waiver**, when the inclusion of steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the U.S. will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent.
- **General applicability waiver**. These waivers apply across multiple awards and can be “product-specific” or “non-product specific.” General applicability waivers can only stand for five (5) year periods.
- The OMB memorandum encourages agencies to consider the below principles when issuing a waiver:
  - **Time-limited**. This type of waiver is bound by a time period, e.g., when supply chain breakage points make a type of product non-available.
  - **Targeted**. Waivers outside a specific project should be limited to item(s), product(s) or material(s) or category(ies) of item(s), product(s), or material(s) necessary. Broader waivers will receive increased scrutiny from OMB.
  - **Conditional**. Agencies should issue waivers that support the policies of the Act and Executive Order 14005, *Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America’s Workers*.

## V. Topics for Consultation

While the Build America Buy America purchase preference is required by law, federal agencies are able to pursue discretionary waivers in coordination with the OMB Made In America Office (MIAO).

The WHCNAA, in collaboration with participating federal agencies, seeks Tribal Leader input to ensure that BABA is implemented effectively in Indian Country. The following questions are designed to help guide the conversation of the consultation, but they are not an exhaustive list. Comments may be provided at the consultation sessions or in writing. Written comments may be sent to the following email address: [whcnaa@bia.gov](mailto:whcnaa@bia.gov). All comments are due by Thursday, October 20, 2022.

### Consultation Framing Questions for Discussion:

#### 1. General Areas of Discussion on BABA

- **Implementation**. How will implementation of BABA affect tribal infrastructure projects?
- **Tribal Products**. Do you or your Tribal businesses currently manufacture or sell iron, steel, manufactured products, and/or construction materials that are being or otherwise could be used in infrastructure projects?
- **Sourcing**. Does your nation currently source any or all infrastructure project components—i.e., iron, steel, manufactured products, and/or construction materials—domestically?
- **Financial Assistance**. What financial assistance tools are you or your technical staff familiar with regarding BABA?
- **Determining Whether Products are BABA-Compliant**. Do you believe you will confront challenges in determining what iron/steel, manufactured and/or construction materials are BABA-compliant? If you anticipate challenges, do

you have suggestions for how Federal Agencies could help you overcome those challenges?

## 2. Public Interest Waivers

- **De minimis thresholds.** Construction costs in Indian Country are often higher than in non-tribal areas.
  - If federal agencies establish a de minimis waiver, what percent or maximum dollar amount of project costs should an agency waive these requirements?
  - What should federal agencies consider when developing a de minimis threshold for on- or off-tribal lands?
- **Small grants.** Agencies may waive purchase preference requirements for small grants below the simplified acquisition threshold,<sup>3</sup> in perpetuity or to be phased out over time.
  - Should agencies consider utilizing the simplified acquisition threshold as the basis for public interest waivers?
- **Minor components.** Federal agencies may consider waivers for minor deviations for miscellaneous minor components within iron and steel products, comprising no more than 5 percent total material cost of otherwise domestically produced iron and steel products.
  - What are common minor components to infrastructure projects commonly utilized in Indian Country?
  - How often do tribal projects include minor components?
- **Adjustment period.** Agencies may consider a time limited waiver to allow recipients and agencies time to transition to this rule.
  - How much time is necessary for tribal nations to adopt these domestic purchase preferences for federally financed or supported infrastructure projects?
  - Should training be provided to Tribes prior to implementation of BABA?
- **Other considerations.** Agencies may consider waivers based on other considerations such as whether the project is managed by a low-resource community, resource availability, domestic job impacts, et al.
  - What other considerations should agencies consider when developing waiver standards?
  - In the event there are multiple federal funds supporting an infrastructure project which federal agency should be the responsible agency for waiver authority?

## 3. Nonavailability Waivers

- **Market Study/Research.** Before granting this waiver, agencies should consider whether the recipient has performed thorough market research.
  - What are standard practices that tribal nations and communities use when pursuing market research on product availability?

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<sup>3</sup> The simplified acquisition threshold is based on the Federal Acquisition Regulation, to be updated in the Federal Register. In Fiscal Year 2022, the simplified acquisition threshold is \$250,000, per 85 FR 62485.

- What types of justification should federal agencies recognize as acceptable when considering the development or administration of these waivers?
- What markets to tribal nations currently scope when purchasing steel, iron, and related goods for infrastructure projects?

#### 4. **Unreasonable Cost Waivers**

- **Cost Comparison.** Before granting this waiver, agencies should ensure recipients provide adequate documentation that no domestic alternatives are available within the cost parameter.
  - How do tribes currently identify and manage for cost-comparisons when identifying project costs?
  - Are publicly available cost comparison data sets sufficient for the realities in cost differences that tribes encounter?

#### 5. **General Applicability Waivers**

- **General considerations.** General applicability waivers require a public comment period and are only applicable for five (5) years pending review and renewal.
  - What product or non-product specific waiver standards should agencies consider adopting?
  - What are well-established sourcing challenges that your nation or Indian Country at large faces?



**Designation Form to be copied onto Tribal Letterhead**

Mr. Anthony Morgan Rodman  
1849 C Street NW, MS 4160  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Rodman:

Under Executive Order 13175, "Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments," the White House Council on Native American Affairs aims to respect Indian tribal self-government and sovereignty, honor tribal treaty and other rights, and meet the responsibilities that arise from the unique legal relationship between the Federal government and Tribal governments.

I am unable to attend the consultations discussing Build America, Buy America on Wednesday, September 21, 2022. I hereby designate:

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who holds the position of \_\_\_\_\_ within  
the Tribe to act as my proxy for this meeting.

Sincerely,