

**The Department of Interior (DOI) Listening Session on Tribal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation
October 28, 2021, 12:00 pm- 2:00 pm ET¹**

Background

[Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) (EO 13985) directs agencies to conduct equity assessments of select programs to determine whether underserved communities face systemic barriers in accessing benefits and opportunities. Per EO 13985, underserved communities are defined as, “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life...such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.” As part of implementing [EO 13985](#), the Department of the Interior (DOI) is assessing the equity of its programs related to three initial focus areas that support the agency's mission and have high potential for equity impact: (1) contracting, (2) recreational visitation, and (3) tribal discretionary grants. This session on Tribal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation is part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Resilience Program Funding, and this session's goal was to take a deeper dive in order to understand Tribe's needs regarding climate and how grant programs could support Tribes. DOI contracted with Kearns and West to conduct 15 virtual listening sessions where the public were invited to provide comments and feedback on the barriers that limit access, diversity, and equity as well as recommendations of actions the Department should take to reduce barriers.

On behalf of DOI, Kearns and West facilitated a listening session on Tribal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation on October 28, 2021, from 12:00 pm- 2:00 pm ET.

Participant Data

Ahead of this virtual session, registration totaled 467 registrants. The listening session saw a maximum number of participants in the session with totals around 211.

Participants were invited to voluntarily use Poll Everywhere to understand who was participating and as a tool for building community in a virtual space. Participants were asked where they were participating from, what their Tribal affiliation is, what are some of the biggest climate concerns, have they developed a climate adaptation plan, have they implemented a climate adaptation plan, and what DOI resources have been helpful.

Participants were located across a variety of geographies with large populations in the states of Alaska, Arizona, Virginia, Michigan, Montana, California, South Carolina, Washington, Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. In terms of Tribal affiliations, participants were affiliated with the following Tribes: Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska; Arikara, Hidatsa, Mandan Nation; Assiniboine; Blackfeet; Blackfoot & Cree, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; Campo Kumeyaay; Cherokee; Chippewa Cree; Coleville, Dine, Eastern Band Cherokee; Oneida Nation; Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation; Hopi-Tewa-Dakota; Ioway; Jemez

¹ This meeting summary was prepared for the U.S. Department of the Interior by Kearns & West, Inc. (K&W) pursuant to an existing IDIQ contract.

Pueblo/San Felipe Pueblo; Karuk; Kaska (Liard First Nation) and Tahltan; KBIC Anishinaabe (Keweenaw Bay Indian Community); Lake Superior band of Chippewa; Mechoopda; Me-Wuk; Mvskoke; Navajo Nation; Ojibwe; Oneida Nation; Paiute-Shoshone; Pueblo; Quechan Indian Tribe; Quinault; Sac and Fox; Salish and Kootenai; Seminole; Sugipiaq; Swinomish; Tlingit; Unangan; Wenatchi Methow; and Yurok. There were also participants who did not identify with a specific Tribal nation, but either worked in organizations related to Tribal nations or the federal government.

Out of those who participated in the polling, 54% reported that their Tribal Nation was either developing or had a developed a Tribal climate adaptation plan, where 35% did not have a developed Tribal climate adaptation plan, and 11% were unsure if their Tribal nation had developed or was developing a Tribal climate adaptation plan. Out of those Tribal nations who had developed a climate adaptation plan, 54% of them had begun implementation, whereas 35% had not begun implementation, and 11% are unsure about implementation.

Priorities of participants from Tribal nations developing climate adaptation plans included the following themes: capacity building, the inclusion of animals and plants, carbon storage, collaboration, consultation, cultural preservation, development of infrastructure and resources, education, food sovereignty, housing, co-management of lands, infrastructure, leadership development and support, preparedness, resiliency training, restoration, sustainability, and youth engagement.

Lastly, when asked what DOI resources have been helpful in developing Tribal climate adaptation and mitigation plans, participants mentioned technical assistance and Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Climate Resilience Program Funding.

Agenda Overview

The purpose of this listening session was to begin a conversation with Tribal nations around the Administrations' priorities of climate change, equity, accessibility, and environmental justice. This listening session hoped to provide an opportunity for sharing information, discussing climate adaptation and mitigation priorities, and learning about perceived barriers to action. Based on the goals of the session, Kearns & West with the assistance of Bureau of Indian Affairs developed a two-hour agenda.

Miro, an interactive, collaborate virtual whiteboard was used to capture participants' responses to developed facilitation questions. Prior to the session, participants were sent a session reminder email with instructions on how to use Miro, which included a PDF of Miro Tips and a YouTube video tutorial. Sara Omar, Kearns & West, provided an additional demonstration of the Miro board, with instructions for those uncomfortable with the technology to express their ideas verbally or by using the chat function. Miro provided participants with the space to reflect and respond to the following guiding questions:

- What are your top priorities surrounding climate adaptation, mitigation, and implementation, and what are the science needs to support these priorities?
- Do you have a climate adaptation plan(s) for your Tribe/Tribal program? How are they being implemented? What are the barriers to implementing them?

Utilizing these questions as a framework, Ben Duncan, Kearns & West, led participants through a series of discussions. Participants were divided into four breakout rooms to answer the same set of questions across rooms. With many participants, the goal of the breakouts was to conduct smaller group discussions through a Miro board activity, the chat function, or participants' verbal remarks. Each breakout session

introduced the topic matter with a question on the Miro board. Facilitators then summarized participants remarks into themes related to the larger conversation.

In addition to guided facilitation of Miro activities and reflection, the listening session opened with remarks from Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget Rachael Taylor and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Taylor recognized Tribal nations and their relationship to climate change impacts, as well as thanking those who joined the call today. Assistant Secretary Newland stressed that Tribal nations are at the forefront of the climate crisis, and adaptation and mitigation strategies are of great importance to the Department, and to the federal government. Both Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Taylor and Assistant Secretary Newland stressed that this session would provide information on how to prioritize resources to strengthen Tribal sovereignty around issues of climate change.

Themes and Concepts

Five thematic conversations were held during the listening session across four breakout rooms on: (1) Tribal community adaptation, (2) Tribal “successes”, (3) greenhouse gas mitigation, (4) resources and needs, and (5) recommendations. A summary of each conversation’s themes is below.

Tribal Climate Adaptation

This section looked for participants to begin brainstorming answers to the following questions:

- If you have developed or are developing a plan, what have been the most important factors in your successes, or challenges?
- How do you know what is working? Or what do you measure?

Participants were encouraged to reflect on their current adaptation plans, if applicable, and what has made these plans successful. **Participants were asked these questions through the Miro board Activity in their respective breakout rooms lending itself to the collective themes of acknowledging climate change, funds to create plans, and the incorporation of indigenous and cultural knowledge.** These collective themes are illustrated in *Figure 1: Tribal Climate Adaptation Miro Board Screenshot* in Appendix A.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room One** included themes of acknowledgement of climate change, funding to create plans, and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices into adaptation plans. Participants while in discussion, raised concerns around building consensus and acknowledgement of climate change impacts. Participants raised funding as a barrier to why their Tribes do not currently have an adaptation plan. Participants expressed concern around the federal government not recognizing Tribal knowledge that exists, and the role of Tribal nations as natural stewards to the earth. This has become a concern as Tribal nations work with federal government agencies such as United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Parks Service (NPS).

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Two** included themes of creating communication channels within Tribal nations around climate change and the many challenges that are inherent in drafting a climate adaptation plan. Participants raised current challenges including identifying infrastructure needs related to fuel vs. electric power, climate adaptation plans being link to educational institutions, and the challenge of building adaptation plans without capacity, both in terms of funding and human resources.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Three** included themes of the challenges inherent in developing an adaptation plan, which include some funding, staff capacity, and the ability to conduct work during COVID-19. Participants also raised it is hard to know what to prioritize when creating an adaptation plan because it is important to protect all aspects of the natural world.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Four** included how hard it is to develop a plan without funding and expertise from tribal members. Tribes who have developed adaptation plans emphasized a similar need to have incorporated Tribal members and Tribal ecological knowledge into their plans.

Tribal “Successes”

This section looked for participants to begin brainstorming answers to the following questions:

- What are any “putting the plan into action” implementation success stories you’d like to share?
- What do you think the most important factors were in your success or barriers to implementing the plan?
- Anything else we should know?

Participants were encouraged to reflect on current Tribal successes in the fields of climate adaptation and mitigation. **Participants were asked these questions through the Miro board Activity in their respective breakout rooms lending itself to the collective themes of success in implementing plans, the barriers to implementing plans, and actions that can be taken to alleviate impacts of climate change.** These collective themes are illustrated in *Figure 2: Tribal “Successes” Miro Board Screenshot* in Appendix A.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room One** included themes of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) partnerships, environmental baselines, and successful actions taken from developed mitigation plans. Participants also raised success with FEMA in creating mitigations plans that also incorporate climate components. Other participants raised the success of environmental baseline indicators within their Tribal community, which have allowed the establishment of an environment baseline to inform the development of a successful plan. Additionally, participants raised discussion to having implemented mitigation plans and seen success in using a community shelter with power outages and on days with excessive heat.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Two** defined successes and barriers to adaptation plan implementation. Participants highlighted their own success in recruiting and supporting more tribal environmental scientists to help manage their own tribal environmental programs, but an obstacle remains for Tribes to have ownership over tribal lands.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Three** defined successes as building stronger partnerships, building community interest, creating renewable energy, installing solar panels, controlling invasive species, and restoring traditional food systems. Some participants have not finished developing their plans yet, but a concern among many Tribes include the need to increase Tribal food security. Some tribes have increased food security through hydroponic gardens and greenhouses, as well as community gardens.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Four** defined Tribal successes as collaboration and sharing of resources to create successful Tribal community adaptation plans.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Mitigation

This section looked for participants to begin brainstorming answers to the following questions:

- Do you have completed greenhouse gas mitigation actions you would like to share?
- What were the factors in its success, or challenges?
- Anything else we should know?

Participants were encouraged to reflect on their current mitigation plans, if applicable, and what has made these plans successful. **Participants were asked these questions through the Miro board Activity in their respective breakout rooms lending itself to the collective themes of not having the appropriate resources and actions taken by some Tribes to begin mitigating GHGs.** These collective themes are illustrated in *Figure 3: Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Mitigation Miro Board Screenshot* in Appendix A.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room One** included themes of not having the resources, both capacity and infrastructure, to implement plans that address GHG emissions. Participants raised concerns about not having the resources to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Some Tribes mentioned including greenhouse gas mitigation in their adaptation plan, but do not have the infrastructure for electric vehicles (EVs).

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Two** included conversation around the successes that various Tribal communities have had with mitigation GHGs, as well as recommending opportunities for Tribal youth in the environmental field. Participants raised examples of Tribal success in Oklahoma to create carbon sinks and an Alaskan Tribal nation was able to remove diesel powered generators to decrease their carbon footprint.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Three** included ways that Tribes have been able to mitigate greenhouse gases including: solar panel installation, offshore wind energy, hydroelectric plant use, greenhouse gas reports, recycling programs, solar power training programs for Tribal citizens, and creating community involvement in processes. Participants stressed that many of their actions taken to mitigate GHGs requires them to adapt their practices with hopes of re-incorporating traditional knowledge and practice.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Four** centered on how a lack of resources has prevented them from successfully mitigating GHG emissions. A lack of resources included discussion of a lack of funding and proper infrastructure to implement further action.

Resources and Needs

This section looked for participants to begin brainstorming answers to the following questions:

- What are your Tribes' funding needs and priorities related to climate adaptation and mitigation?
- Are there types of training that would help you and your Tribal Nation work more effectively on climate adaptation and mitigation (e.g., training in climate impacts; climate scenario planning; GIS training, monitoring, and climate communications; in-person workshops; online webinars; etc.)?

Participants were encouraged to reflect on their current adaptation plans, if applicable, and what resources could make these plans successful. **Participants were asked these questions through the Miro board Activity in their respective breakout rooms lending itself to the collective themes of**

additional funding, technical training, and additional staffing needs. These collective themes are illustrated in *Figure 4: Resources and Needs Miro Board Screenshot* in Appendix A.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room One** included themes on how the Department could better support Tribal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation through funding, training, and expertise. Participants raised the need to dedicate funding towards Tribal members working on cultural plants and materials. An abundance of Indigenous Knowledge exists to support climate adaptation plans; however, there exist a funding barrier to implement. Participants raised that this Indigenous Knowledge could allow Tribes to teach federal workers, rather than federal workshops with intended Tribal audiences.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Two** raised resources and needs as it relates to increasing regional funding and holding grant writing training sessions and workshops for Tribes to access this money. Participants raised the diversity of regional climate change impacts, and how those require different funding and action to be successfully mitigated.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Three** raised the following as necessary resources for tribes to have successful climate adaptation and mitigation plans: staffing, materials, trainings in various technical areas, funding of farming and irrigation programs, intertribal summits, facilitation, and community outreach training. Many participants expressed that climate adaptation requires skilled labor and construction, which some Tribes do not have the funding for. Additionally, participants raised the need to develop ways to creatively fund economic development projects, when federal government funds are not enough or do not cover intended community programming or infrastructure needs.

Participant discussion in **Breakout Room Four** stressed the need for the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge in climate adaptation and mitigation plans as well as funding that would allow Tribes to hire their own environmental consultants or Native American PhD scientists.

Overarching Recommendations

Participants throughout the session and in breakout rooms provided input and feedback to inform the Department. Participants were also given space through the Miro board to record additional recommendations for the Department, which can be seen as *Figure 5: Recommendations Miro Board Screenshot* in Appendix A. The key recommendations the Kearns and West Facilitation Team heard and would like to emphasize include:

- Collaborating among regional Tribal nations to identify climate issues and collectively develop adaptation and mitigation plans.
- Increasing Indigenous Knowledge in federal programming around climate change, adaptation, and mitigation.
- Increasing funding towards programming and implementation of climate adaptation and mitigation plans.
- Increasing training and workshops in grant writing and technical spaces like GIS, how to get to net-zero carbons, and data governance.
- Increasing Tribal youth opportunities to acquire Indigenous Knowledge and career development in environmental science.
- Supporting intertribal conferences and forums that allow Tribes to exchange information, and to invite Federal employees to learn from the exchange of Indigenous Knowledge.

What are any "putting the plan into action" implementation success stories you'd like to share?

What do you think the most important factors were in your success or barriers to implementing the plan?

Anything else we should know?



Figure 2: Tribal "Successes" Miro Board Screenshot

Do you have completed greenhouse gas mitigation actions you would like to share?

What were the factors in its success, or challenges?

Anything else we should know?

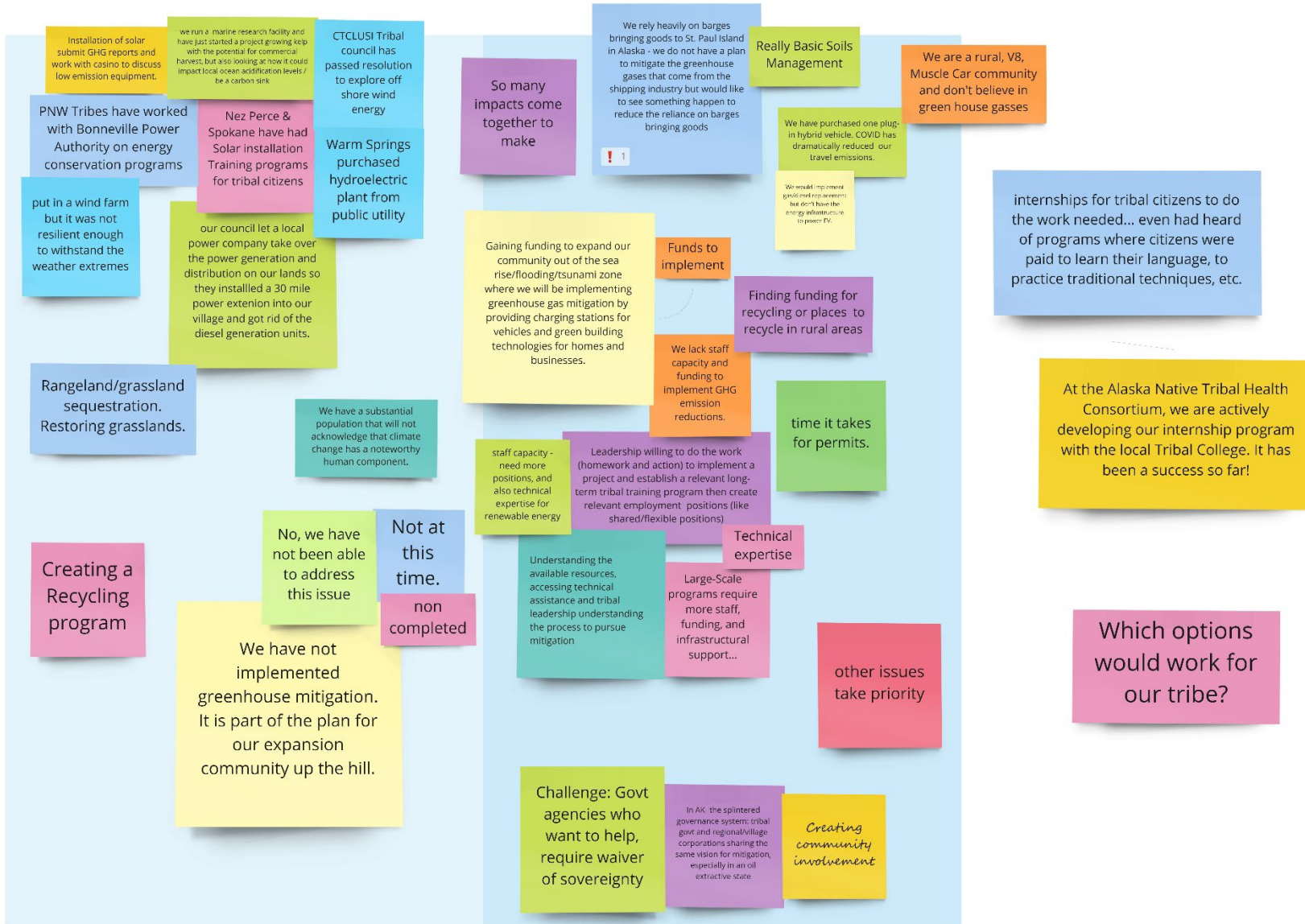


Figure 3: Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Mitigation Miro Board Screenshot

What are your Tribes' funding needs and priorities related to climate adaptation and mitigation?

Are there types of training that would help you and your Tribal Nation work more effectively on climate adaptation and mitigation (e.g., training in climate impacts, climate scenario planning, GIS training, monitoring, climate communications; in person workshops, online webinars, etc.)?



Figure 4: Resources and Needs Miro Board Screenshot

Recommendations

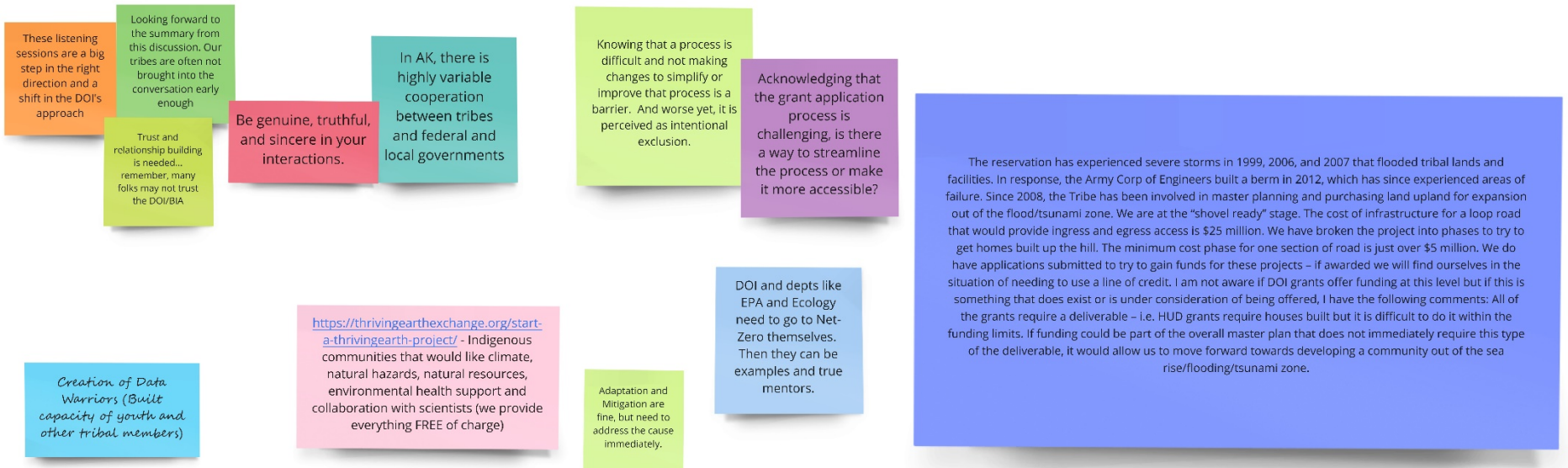


Figure 5: Recommendations Miro Board Screenshot