

DCTA Engagement Spotlight

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO), Minnesota



Fast facts about Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) is a Federally recognized Indian tribe.
- The reservation is located in rural north-central Minnesota within the four-county region of Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard, and Itasca counties.
- The LLBO is part of the Ojibwe–Anishinabe, the second largest Indigenous people in North America after the Navajo Nation.
- The City of Cass Lake, Minnesota, serves as the hub for Tribal government programming.

DCTA helps address tribal community's data needs

In February 2023, The Tribal Development Office of LLBO applied for technical assistance through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Distressed Cities and Persistent Poverty Technical Assistance (DCTA) program. BCT Partners (BCT) was tasked to assess the existing conditions and challenges and identify opportunities regarding the tribal community's data needs (e.g., processes, usage, storage, security, and sovereignty).



In March 2023, BCT held an introductory call with the Tribal Development office staff to gather contextual information and gain a high-level understanding of the community's needs and challenges, specifically around the topic of data.

BCT visits Leech Lake

Following the call, BCT conducted a two-day in person site visit in late May, to gather additional information. During the site visit, BCT met with LLBO's Tribal Development office staff and representatives from the following departments:

Medically Assisted Opioid Treatment and Opioid Response Team

MIS/Information Technology

Community Development

Leech Lake Financial Services (CDFI)

Pregnant Women & Prenatal Services

Adolescent Outpatient

Health Department Harm Reduction

Housing Authority Board Member

Tribal Police Drug and Alcohol Prevention, Narcan Team

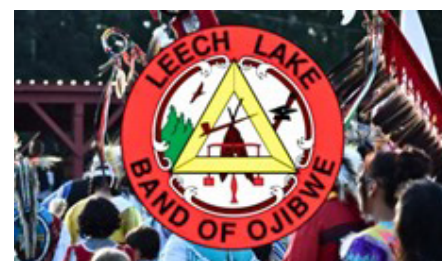
Drug Court Team

Tribal Police Grants Program

Foster Care Program

Diabetes Program

Head Start Program





Challenges to data collection, management, and use

Through the needs assessment phase, BCT was able to identify the following challenges related to data:

- Centralizing data collection will need the support and buy-in of tribal council.
- Local Indian Communities (LIC) provide information to their district representative. LICs vary in their level of organization and involvement.
- Important to engage with elders throughout this process.
- Small percentage of the land is held in trust within the reservation boundary. Communities are small and dispersed. Approximately 10,000 tribal members live within or near the reservation.
- LLBO departments work in silos with minimal to no data sharing agreements.
- Staff turnover creates disruption in data collection processes. Need to address secure storage of data, shared use agreements, and privacy concerns.
- More data is needed for grant applications and to inform decisions.
- Community mistrust of providing data.
- Tribal members recognize collecting data centrally can take years to complete, but benefits outweigh setbacks.



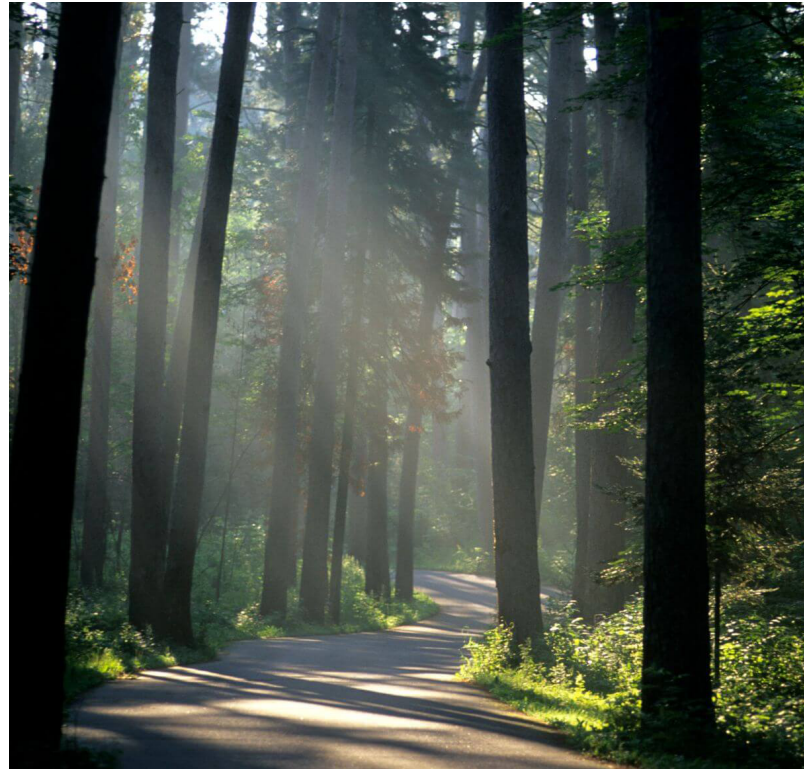
BCT's approach to tribal community engagement

Leveraging motivational interviewing techniques, BCT's TA team engaged tribal members in a series of authentic listening sessions that are human centered and trauma informed. The team gained a nuanced understanding of the community's collective trauma and ongoing challenges. Attendees shared heartfelt testimonies and aspired to grow the tribe's data infrastructure, control its own narrative, and better communicate their realities. A guided community tour and document review sessions complemented the listening sessions.

Tribal resolution process

Following the site visit, BCT's TA team drafted an assessment report which contained findings and TA recommendations for LLBO to consider. The team presented the report to the Tribal Development office in July and received positive feedback. With BCT's guidance, the Tribal Development office then drafted a Tribal Resolution which was reviewed by the tribe's Legal Department before it was presented to the Tribal Council.

In late August, the Tribal Development office notified BCT that the Tribal Council had approved the resolution and LLBO was ready to proceed with the TA recommendations. The Tribal Development staff credited BCT for the intentional and authentic trust building process that took place during the site visit, as it was instrumental in helping to obtain expeditious consensus from the tribal council.



Looking ahead

The Direct TA engagement officially launched in late September with a virtual kickoff.

LLBO expressed resilience and optimism for the future despite the challenges identified. A comprehensive data plan will help narrate and convey LLBO's needs and desires to other tribal members and partners through trust building, partnership and data governance.