



2024 Agency Work Plan First Quarter Summary Report

The Indian Health Service's mission is *"to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level."*

Background: In January 2024, Indian Health Service leadership implemented the new [2024 Agency Work Plan](#), which includes 15 priorities. In addition to the 15 Work Plan priorities, IHS leadership transitioned 14 of last year's 2023 Work Plan priorities to operational action items that the agency will continue to monitor throughout this calendar year. The 2024 Agency Work Plan outlines critical actions the IHS has taken over the current year to address risk priorities. A workgroup has led each activity to identify root causes and work toward sustainable improvement to demonstrate a measurable impact on the agency. The goal is to complete the actions in the 2024 Agency Work Plan by December 31, 2024. The IHS remains committed to mitigating programmatic and operational risks before they arise. IHS leadership is focused on increased and effective communication with tribal and urban Indian organization partners on this work while developing sustainable actions.

Status: Communications about the 2024 Agency Work Plan include progress, barriers encountered, resources needed, next steps, specific timelines, and accomplishments. IHS leadership tracks progress for each activity and looks for sustained progress over time. IHS leadership is committed to providing improved transparency and clarity on information and initiatives that are being undertaken by the IHS, as well as in coordination with our partnering agencies. Results of the work are made public for awareness. IHS is providing quarterly updates on the progress of the Work Plan through the [IHS Work Plan Status Report](#).

First Quarter Work Plan and Operational Priority Accomplishments:

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL): Sanitation Facilities Construction (SFC) Program Marketing and Rebranding – SFC leadership continued its work with a contracted vendor through the Office of Personnel Management to strategically identify SFC Program marketing and rebranding opportunities to support staff recruitment efforts at the national level. A menu of potential strategies was made available to SFC leadership on March 6, 2024, and is presently being reviewed and prioritized for implementation.
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: SFC Engineer Internship Program – The SFC Program enhanced its recruitment efforts by establishing a new engineer internship program with the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education. A total of 17 internship positions are available at various IHS Area Offices

and the marketing, interview, selection, and acceptance phases have begun and will continue until all positions are filled with aspiring engineering students.

- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Staff Retention Efforts** – The SFC Program continued the use of 10% retention incentives for all SFC staff associated with BIL work and began exercising its new “up to 50%” retention authority for qualified engineers. The retention incentives are used to maintain a high quality SFC workforce.
- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Memorandum of Understanding with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)** – The IHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with AISES to strengthen American Indian and Alaska Native occupational and career planning in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focused on health care facilities and environmental health career opportunities within the IHS. The MOU promotes IHS as a potential employer of Native STEM students within the Office of Environmental Health & Engineering. SFC Program leaders also began attending regional AISES conferences to interact with members and increase the visibility of IHS as an employer.
- **Veterans Affairs and IHS MOU Performance Measures: Improve External Communication** – On March 27, 2024, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the IHS sent a [letter](#) to tribal leaders and urban Indian organization leaders requesting recommendations on the [Draft Annual Operational Plan](#) for Fiscal Year 2024 and to share the completed FY 2023 VHA-IHS MOU Operational Plan. A joint in-person tribal consultation and urban confer session will be held on April 15, 2024, in Chandler, Arizona, with comments due on April 30, 2024.
- **Evaluate and Improve Internal Communications** – On January 31, 2024, IHS leadership hosted an Improving Internal Communications Town Hall with nearly 700 IHS employees participating. In January, IHS also launched a new tool to streamline the process of receiving valuable feedback from employees on ways IHS can make improvements across a variety of topic areas. To date, 79 employees have provided their recommendations. IHS also collected feedback from employees using an Improving Internal Communication Survey, which concluded on February 16, 2024. IHS will use the results from the town hall and survey to develop a comprehensive internal communications strategy to ensure IHS employees receive the information they need to do their jobs more effectively.
- **Improve Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) Operations** – With more than half of the IHS budget being administered through tribal health care operations, it is imperative the IHS engage in ISDEAA training endeavors to ensure the agency is prepared to facilitate the transfer of more IHS programs, services, functions, and activities to tribal health programs. IHS held five ISDEAA bite size learning sessions and three town halls for IHS employees to learn about ISDEAA policies, procedures, and best practices on topics related to ISDEAA Title I contracting and Title V compacting activities.

- Acquisition Procedures Standardization – Only warranted contracting officers or purchase cardholders acting within their delegated authority can make a commitment or agreement binding the government to perform services or obtain supplies. The IHS 2024 Unauthorized Commitments Prevention training is now mandatory for all IHS employees to learn how to follow proper processes and procedures in accordance with their respective authorities. As of March 28, 2024, the agency is at 82% completion.
- Purchased/Referred Care Delivery Area (PRCDA) Expansions – The IHS announced a new [Purchased/Referred Care Delivery Area Expansion](#) webpage on the PRC website. It includes a status tracker of submitted PRCDA expansion requests, the PRCDA listing, and a summary of PRCDA versus service delivery area. A PRCDA refers to the geographic area within which PRC services will be made available by the IHS to members of an identified Indian community who reside in the area.

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