

IHS Strategic Plan 2018-2022

Summary of Comments received October 30 – November 3, 2017

The following is a summary of comments received on the draft IHS strategic framework.

IHS Mission: To raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

- Word-smith:
 - Purpose rather than mission
 - IHS as a resource
 - Mention tribal and tribally operated healthcare
 - Spiritual health is unclear
 - Elevate or advance instead of “raise”
 - Highest quality rather than “highest level”
 - Include language specific to “meaningful” consultation
 - Include language specific to collaboration
 - Include language specific to self-determination/governance and/or empowerment
 - Include language specific to cultural
- Indirect and direct references to public health
 - Morbidity
 - Health care system assessment
 - Identifying gaps and needs
 - Inequities within system
 - Inequities versus other systems
 - Holistic, comprehensive care
 - Prevention
 - Life-span
- One mention of using US Healthy People Standards

IHS Vision: A health system that promotes Tribal ownership and pride.

- Word-smith:
 - Equal access to and quality of care
 - Health system partnership regardless of who provides it
 - Supportive
 - Reliable
 - Employee engagement
 - Patient outcomes
 - Tribal confidence
 - Culture
 - Define “health system”
- Public health
 - Holistic care
 - Prevention
- “Ownership” continues to be a contentious topic

- Does ownership mean:
 - 638 will be forced?
 - 638 is different than others, and how?
- Sovereignty
- Self determination
- Change to “native values”
- Describe a system that:
 - Fosters tribal ownership, identity and pride
 - Fully supports all tribal programming decisions
 - Is combined/a partnership

Goal 1: To ensure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people.

- Integrate cultural competency standards in all training programs and ensure health professional receive training
- “To ensure comprehensive and culturally acceptable health care services are made available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people.” Suggested wording
- Replace American Indian with Federal Recognized Tribes and Alaska Natives
- Replace "culturally acceptable" with "culturally appropriate"
- Include Tribal self-governance
- “American Indian and Alaska Native” should be moved to beginning of the sentence because it gets lost in the goal.
- Replace culturally acceptable with "culturally responsive" or "culturally informed"
- Include “culturally respectful”
- Provide services the patient desires, as well as needs.
- Replace "culturally acceptable" with "culturally responsive"
- Include culturally sensitive and respectful staff. Promote culturally sensitive and respectful health care.
- Include "ensuring that Urban Indians access services specific to their needs”
- Include sustainability and traditional medicine in the Goal 1 statement.

Objective 1.1 Recruit, develop and retain a dedicated, competent, caring workforce.

- Include wording accountable workforce that consistently delivers the highest level of professional services
- Replace word "dedicated" with "devoted"
- Include a time frame to ensure that hiring delays are reduced.
- To coordinate and consult with tribes on the means necessary to recruit and retain a dedicated, competent work force.
- Need to raise pay scales to be consistent with private sector pay scales
- Invest in and mentor Native youth to obtain health science degrees. Current IHS scholarship program is not adequate.
- Re-write this in SMART-goal format so that we can make sure it is followed through on. How will we know that we have recruited, developed, and retained the appropriate number of people?
Ex: Recruit, develop, and retain a dedicated, competent, and caring workforce by increasing

clinical workforce by 10% over the next 5 years (for example, but you would need to determine a reasonable metric)

- Must include self-governance tribes in this objective since this objective appears to be focused on IHS direct service facilities. Self-governance tribes have had significant issues with recruitment and retention.
- Include innovative recruitment and retention strategies that make tribal communities a sought after job/placement for health care providers. For example, Portland Area Tribes have highlighted the lack of loan repayment as a barrier to retention because health care providers are usually waitlisted, especially in underserved communities.
- Consider metrics to evaluate the recruitment and retention of workforce objective, i.e., aim for 80% - 90% of personnel by the end of the following fiscal year.
- Improve access to physical, behavioral and oral health services in underserved and rural tribal communities by supporting the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP).

Objective 1.2. Build, strengthen and sustain collaborative relationships.

- Include sustainable partnerships both internally to the federal government and externally with tribes.
- Add " that result in enhanced western and traditional Indigenous medicine services for AI/AN.
- "To foster and sustain collaborative partnerships." Include network providers
- Re-write this in SMART-goal format. The current objective has no definition of what it means to "sustain collaborative relationships"
- IHS should strive to collaborate across federal agencies and stakeholders to ensure effective and coordinated implementation of issues such as mental health parity, especially as it pertains to substance use disorders and serious mental illness are key to improving health care outcomes in tribal communities.

Objective 1.3 Increase access to quality health care services.

- Include public health, behavioral health and wellness services.
- "Expand access to quality health care services to American Indians and Alaska Natives."
- Include family-based, comprehensive, safe and preventive health care services
- Include environmental health
- And access to "safe water, sewage and solid waste disposal"
- New objective: Increase access to safe water supply and sanitation facilities
- Re-write this in SMART-goal format. The current objective has no metric. How much should we increase access to healthcare by? How will we know if we've increased access to healthcare by a reasonable amount? E.g. Increase access to quality health care services by opening 5 new healthcare facilities over the next 10 years or by reducing average wait time for appointments to less than 30 days (for example, but you would need to establish the actual way you would like to increase access to quality health care.)

Goal 2: To promote excellence and quality through innovation of the Indian Health system into an optimally performing organization.

- Word-smith
 - Include reliability or learning (as it relates to innovation on the Indian health system)
 - Add (culture of) "safety" and "freedom"

- Quality as a business strategy
- To promote excellence and quality through innovative systems of change focusing on performance.
- Research, design and implement:
 - innovative strategies to enhance overall excellence and quality
 - best practice for business processes
- Optimally performing system/organization/business office functions
- Streamline business systems/fiscal systems
- A few mentions of alternative payment methods/models
- Modernize IT
 - Leveraging available data
 - Use other reporting systems (non-RPMS)
 - Improve financial management
- Focus on coordination and consulting, rather than “optimal” practices
- Acknowledge unique regions/tribes and allow for local tribe strategies (management and program)
- Set integrated goals and measurable objectives
- Strengthen employee performance and accountability
- Develop and implement improved recruitment, retention and training of talented and motivated staff
- Integrated service systems
 - Holistic
 - Behavioral
 - Physical
 - Traditional
- Include public health and environmental health
 - Ongoing
 - Emergency response

Objective 2.1 Create quality improvement capability at all levels of the organization.

- Additions/adjustments to IHS manual
 - Federal vs state/tribal rules to follow
 - Collection of IHS websites that link to state websites as references in the manual
 - Quality performance improvement capacity at all levels of the organization
- Use SMART goals
- Customer satisfaction survey to measure quality/improvement

Objective 2.2 Provide care to better meet the health care needs of Indian communities.

- Word-smith:
 - Include environmental health
 - Include trauma informed care
 - Environmental and social determinants of health
 - Telehealth and telemedicine
 - Biopsychosocial spiritual services
 - Health disparities
 - Tribal partnerships
 - Targeted/strategic care
 - Raise pay scales to match national private sector pay

Goal 3: Strengthen IHS program management and operations.

- Support and strengthen tribal self-governance and assumption of health service management and operations.
- Expand and maximize the skillsets of dedicated, loyal staff with the potential and the desire to do more.
- Strengthen and standardize IHS program management, services, and operation.
- Update IHS policies and procedures to emphasize the efficient of delivery of services, and to collaborate and coordinate with tribes in those improvement efforts.
- Include Tribal Self-determination & Self-Governance in this goal and its respective objectives.
- Include “Indian health system” after IHS in the goal statement.
- Include transparency and accountability to tribes in the goal statement.
- Optimize business office functions to ensure IHS is engaged in discussions on value-based purchasing.

Objective 3.1 Improve communication within the organization, with Tribes and other stakeholders and with the general public.

- Improve communication, coordination and cooperation between service units, area to service units, area to area, and HQ to service units and area offices and with Tribes. Overall improve communication in IHS.
- Offer time off to personnel to pursue higher education in exchange for more time serving current duty station.
- Enhance communication within the organization, with tribes and all other stakeholders, including the patients and public.
- Build, Strengthen, and sustain collaborative relationships.
- Improve coordination with other DHHS agencies to address AI/AN health care issues.
- Ensure that IHS employees understand how UIHPs actually work.

Objective 3.2 Secure and effectively manage the assets and resources.

- Secure and effectively manage assets and resources to achieve maximum efficiency.
- Raise the pay scales to be consistent with national private sector pay scales.
- Make position descriptions more fluid and easier to edit so that positions better meet the needs of the duty station.
- Create/outline the **minimum** expected duties and skillsets required for certain key positions (standardize nationally) with flexibility given to the Service Unit by granting the ability to ADD/SUBTRACT additional duties (above and beyond the standardized National outline) as needed.
- Streamline operations and business processes within the organization.
- Research, develop and implement a performance/accountability component for all disciplines.
- Effectively manage assets and resources.
- Implement transparency on the development of the annual IHS budget.
- Enhance capital planning and improved organizational design.
- Establish a sustainable telehealth infrastructure or governance program that would prioritize resources in accordance with identified need, establish and promote best practices, and formally evaluate and report on successes and issues.
- Support expanding opportunities for construction of new Indian health care facilities.

- Establish an IT system that will support the integration of various health disciplines with primary care.
- Ensure that IHS personnel are considered to be essential and thus exempt from shutdown-related furloughs.

Objective 3.3 Modernize information technology and information systems to support data driven decisions.

- Improve RPMS so that it will support tribes that utilize non-RPMS systems.
- Improve on the security of health records for all AI AN.
- Enhance partnership with tribal data.
- Enhance data access to Tribal Epi Centers.
- Expand and strengthen this objective to reflect that the modernization of the IHS electronic health record system will be a multi-year endeavor and require specific funding as to not affect the delivery of critical health services to AI AN.