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Policy/Legislative Programs and Opportunities — The following strategies can help you develop and implement health care professional recruitment efforts. In this issue, you will learn about the role funding plays in achieving your hiring objectives.

IHS Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs

Scholarship and loan repayment resources can be effective incentives in your recruiting efforts. The availability of these funds provides opportunities for many students and health care professionals who might otherwise be unable to afford the cost of a health care professional education. Connecting with American Indian and Alaska Native recruits to discuss financial resources for education will help you gain a better understanding of their career expectations, what type of workplace appeals to them and how they would fit in with your organization or team.

The IHS Scholarship Program

The IHS Scholarship Program provides financial assistance for American Indian/Alaska Native undergraduates and graduates to enroll in a variety of degree programs leading to a health profession career. As a recruitment tool, the Scholarship program not only grows the pool of potential Indian health system applicants and American Indian and Alaska Native health care professionals, it also provides an opportunity to groom potential IHS leaders. For more information about the three IHS scholarships (listed below), visit the [IHS Scholarship website](#).



- *The Preparatory Scholarship program* provides financial assistance (including tuition, fees and living expenses) for members and descendants of qualified federally or state-recognized Tribes enrolled in compensatory or preparatory courses leading to entry into health professional schools, including nursing, pharmacy, physician assistant, physical therapy and others as needed by Indian health programs.
- *The Pre-Graduate Scholarship Program (Section 103P)* provides financial support for members and descendants of federally or state-recognized Tribes enrolled in courses leading to a bachelor's degree in specific pre-professional areas, which will allow for application to a postgraduate health professions program, such as medicine, dentistry, podiatry, optometry and others as needed by Indian health programs.
- *The Health Professions Scholarship Program (Section 104)* provides support for American Indian/Alaska Native students from members of federally recognized Tribes who are enrolled in health professions or allied health professions programs. Students agree to a service commitment and payback requirement on acceptance of funding from this program. Priority is given to graduate students and junior-and senior-level students, unless otherwise specified.

The IHS also funds a small number of students annually to attend the Uniformed Services University for the Health Sciences (USUHS). Known as the nation's federal health science university, USUHS offers a curriculum that helps health care professionals develop their skills for careers that serve the country. In exchange, recipients must fulfill a 10-year service commitment to the Indian Health Service and the US Public Health Service. There are only a few IHS positions available each year. However, the USUHS trained physicians are mission driven, often become leaders at IHS and provide retention in the medical category of the US Public Health Service (USPHS).

The IHS Loan Repayment Program

The IHS Loan Repayment Program (LRP) offers health care professionals the opportunity to ease qualified education loans leading to a degree in a health profession discipline while helping Indian health programs meet the staffing needs of high priority sites. It is a great option for applicants willing to commit to full-time clinical practice for at least two years at an Indian health program site in exchange for up to \$40,000 in loan repayment funding and up to an additional \$8,000 to offset the tax liability. Loan repayment participants can extend their initial two-year contract annually and receive up to an additional \$20,000 per year, plus up to \$4,000 for taxes, until their original loan debt is paid. Primary care physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, optometrists and many other health care professionals are eligible to apply for the IHS LRP. Visit the [IHS LRP website](#) for more information.



IHS Supplemental Loan Repayment

The Supplemental Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) allows IHS facilities to fund loan repayment awards to fill specific vacancies at their locations, further helping to improve recruitment efforts. The reality is that the demand for LRP contracts consistently exceeds the capacity to award all program applicants. The SLRP has helped close the gap between the amount of funding authorized by Congress for loan repayment and the actual money needed for employee contracts.

The SLRP is more than just an incentive to health professions job candidates – it can also be a good investment for facilities with hard-to-fill vacancies, especially if those vacancies would normally generate third-party revenue. For example, if a facility goes six months without filling a physician position, they have six months of lapsed salary money. If that money is put toward guaranteed loan repayment, the facility gets a physician guaranteed for two years who, in that time, should bill more than that amount to Medicaid or insurance. That covers the guaranteed loan repayment and can, in fact, be a nice interest payment on the investment.

When you offer this program to your job candidates, the facility has a hiring edge and the employees are still eligible to qualify for regular IHS LRP awards. Check out the [SLRP newsletter](#) for more information.

National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Programs

The NHSC offers scholarship and loan repayment programs to qualified applicants who agree to a service commitment at a qualified site. The NHSC helps the nation's Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) acquire the primary care medical, dental and mental health providers they need by assisting them with scholarship and loan repayment programs.

The NHSC scholarship pays tuition, required fees and certain additional education costs tax free for up to four years. Examples of the types of covered education costs may include books, clinical supplies, laboratory expenses, instruments, two sets of uniforms and travel for one clinical rotation. Scholarship recipients also receive a taxable monthly living stipend. Upon Graduation and completion of training, participants may serve from two to four years as primary care providers in a community-based site in an approved, high-need HPSA.

Participants in the NHSC loan repayment program can receive financial assistance to repay their student loans in exchange for a service commitment as primary care providers in an approved HPSA. NHSC pays up to \$60,000 (tax free) in loan repayment funding for a two-year service commitment. After completing their service commitment, participants may annually apply for additional years of support. Visit the [NHSC website](#) for more information.

Note: Employees cannot receive IHS and NHSC funding simultaneously.

Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) Nurse Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs

The HRSA NURSE Corps Scholarship Program and NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program, formerly known as the Nursing Scholarship Program and Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, have been helping health care facilities with critical shortages of nurses meet their needs since 1992. A Critical Shortage Facility is a health care facility located in, designated as, or serving a primary medical care or mental health Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

The NURSE Corps funds up to 60 percent of qualified health education loans for registered nurses and advanced practice nurses who agree to a two-year service commitment. Likewise, the NURSE Corps Scholarship program is available to full-time nursing students in health degree programs in exchange for a service commitment in critical shortage areas. For more information, visit hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/nursecorps.

Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) State Loan Repayment Programs

The HRSA State Loan Repayment Programs are other recruitment incentives to offer potential employees. Similar to the NHSC program, the HRSA state loan repayment program provides matching funds to more than 30 states to operate their own loan repayment programs for primary care clinicians working in Health Professional Shortage Areas. Eligibility requirements and benefits vary. Visit the [HRSA website](#) to see if your site is eligible to participate and to review the requirements and benefits by state.

You can attract top candidates to your openings when you offer continuing education and training program opportunities. Chief executive officers (CEOs), clinical directors and nurse executives who develop educational initiatives in their facility can assist their professional staff in satisfying their licensing requirements and reduce professional isolation, both of which can keep recruitment efforts in top form. Additionally, continuing education and training can positively impact the accessibility and quality of care in the communities served.