



AUG 04 2022

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to update you on our work at the Indian Health Service (IHS) to recruit, develop, and retain a dedicated, competent, and caring workforce by announcing the allocation of 12 additional Senior Executive Service (SES) positions to the IHS to elevate existing Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions at various IHS Service Units.

Every 2 years, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3133(c), the United States (U.S.) Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reviews the request of each agency for SES position allocations, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, and authorizes a specific number of SES positions for each agency for each of the two subsequent fiscal years. On December 8, 2020, the OPM announced the call for Biennial Review Submission for SES position allocations for fiscal years (FYs) 2022 and 2023. Through this process, on March 3, 2022, the IHS received approval by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for 12 additional SES positions.

Prior to receiving this allocation for additional SES positions, the IHS had a total allocation of 26 SES positions. This allocation represents a 46 percent increase to SES positions at the IHS. Currently, two health care facilities at the IHS have SES-level CEO positions: the Phoenix Indian Medical Center and the Gallup Indian Medical Center.

Establishing SES-level CEO positions at 12 additional IHS Service Units will enable parity across the IHS for positions of similar complexity. Elevating CEO positions to the SES level will enhance the capacity of the IHS to optimize resources, facilities, oversight, and consistency across the organization. In addition, this will create equity across the IHS to effectively recruit and retain executive-level leadership to manage what is presently an executive-level assignment carried out by a General Schedule grade 15 (GS-15).

The allocation of 12 additional SES positions will elevate the CEO positions at the IHS Service Units that follow.

IHS Service Unit	IHS Area
Blackfeet Community Hospital	Billings
Rosebud Indian Hospital	Great Plains
Cheyenne River Health Center	Great Plains
Quentin N. Burdick Memorial Health Care Facility	Great Plains
Pine Ridge Indian Hospital	Great Plains
Crownpoint Health Care Facility	Navajo
Northern Navajo Medical Center	Navajo
Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility	Navajo
Claremore Indian Hospital	Oklahoma City
Lawton Indian Hospital	Oklahoma City
Parker Indian Health Center	Phoenix
Whiteriver Indian Hospital	Phoenix

Chief Executive Officers, also referred to as Health System Administrators, oversee the successful administration of IHS hospitals and medical centers. These individuals must manage increasingly complex and integrated health care, financial, professional, and administrative organizations, and maintain accreditation and certification standards to ensure the highest level of quality care and safety for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) patients. They are also tasked with working and collaborating within a system that overlaps Federal, Tribal, State, local governments; Urban Indian Organizations; and Tribal communities to accomplish the goals for implementing effective health care policies and systems to benefit the entire community.

The knowledge, complexity, and scope of work performed at our largest facilities has expanded over time. Funding, revenue sources, and systems of accreditation and accountability have become increasingly complex throughout all health care systems, including the IHS. Integrating services and collaborating across multiple health systems, which includes contract negotiations, collaborative agreements, integration of technologies, and remote/telehealth access, requires significant knowledge and an acute understanding of impact and implementation issues of an executive-level leader. Chief Executive Officers increasingly interact at an executive level to uphold the special Government-to-Government relationship between the Federal Government and AI/AN Tribes to promote the health care needs of the populations served. Additionally, CEOs provide technical assistance to Tribes and Urban Indian Organizations to develop and sustain Tribal health care programs, and to promote collaboration in the development of each IHS Service Unit's strategic plan.

The hiring process to recruit and fill these SES positions will follow the established hiring process, which includes Tribal Leader participation. Positions will be posted for a minimum of 14 days, open to all U.S. citizens, and subject to Indian Preference. Applicants for the positions will be reviewed by the IHS Executive Resources Board. Before the IHS can officially make SES appointments, selectees must be approved by the IHS Acting Director, HHS Secretary, and the OPM's Qualifications Review Board.

Employees currently occupying the 12 CEO positions will be required to apply and compete for the SES-level positions. There is no provision within 5 C.F.R. § 317.501-502 to reassign an individual into an SES position without open competition, unless that individual is a current member of the SES. If a current incumbent does not apply to the SES-level CEO position, is not selected, or is unable to receive approval by the IHS, HHS, or the OPM, the employee will be reassigned to another GS-15 position.

The recruitment timeline to fill the 12 additional SES-level CEO positions is tentatively scheduled to begin in August 2022. The positions will be recruited simultaneously. In the near future, IHS Area Directors in each of the Areas affected by this announcement will contact Tribal Leaders and Urban Indian Organization Leaders within their Areas to provide updates on Area-specific SES recruitment timelines and processes.

The next scheduled OPM Biennial Review Submission period for FYs 2024 and 2025 will commence later this year. At that time, the IHS will respond with our identified needs for additional SES position allocations.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Fowler -S

Digitally signed by
Elizabeth A. Fowler -S
Date: 2022.08.04
09:38:51 -0400

Elizabeth A. Fowler
Acting Director