



August 30, 2023

Dear Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing in follow-up to a virtual Urban Confer convened on July 13, 2022, by then-Acting Agency Director Elizabeth Fowler, to explore your interest in forming an Urban Indian Interagency Workgroup. The Urban Confer gathered input and recommendations from Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) in accordance with the June 30, 2022-dated letter, which sought to ensure Urban Indian health care needs are considered at the local, regional, and national levels.

In response to this Confer, the Indian Health Service (IHS) received 16 written and verbal comments from Urban Indian Organization Leaders.

In general, commenters recommended the following:

- Establish a new Urban Indian Interagency Workgroup in conjunction with the White House Council on Native American Affairs to ensure more comprehensive and effective collaboration throughout the Federal Government.
- Develop strategies that enhance engagement with Federal agencies and programs with relevance to UIOs.
- Provide greater access to Federal agencies to ensure that UIOs are included in Federal initiatives and discussions that affect UIOs.
- Develop a Federal funding strategy to pilot test innovative approaches and programs that address the needs of Urban Indians.
- Assess existing Federal funding for UIOs to determine the extent to which funding is currently adequate and where increases are needed to allow for greater access by UIOs, with a special emphasis on economic development, entrepreneurship, workforce development, housing, broadband access, education, and community violence prevention.
- Support the expansion of existing partnerships and address the lack of interagency coordination to ensure resources are available for Urban Indian populations.
- Develop and implement strategies in partnership with Federal agencies to ameliorate staff vacancy rates among Urban Indian Organization facilities and meet the challenges of sufficiently staffing UIOs throughout the United States (U.S.).
- Provide technical assistance to Federal agencies to establish Urban Confer policies to address social determinants of health, such as housing, poverty, and education.

As a next step, the IHS will provide your Urban Indian Interagency Workgroup Confer recommendations to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs and the Office of the Secretary's Intradepartmental Council on Native American Affairs.

If you have any questions, please contact Rose Weahkee, Ph.D., Director, Office of Urban Indian Health Programs, IHS, by telephone at (240) 994-9361, or by e-mail at [rose.weahkee@ihs.gov](mailto:rose.weahkee@ihs.gov).

Sincerely,

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Roselyn Tso  
Director