



2024 Agency Work Plan Fourth 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 [2024 Agency Work Plan](#), which included 15 priorities and outlined critical actions the agency took to address key priorities that directly impact oversight, communications, capacity and capability, and the use of funds. In addition, 10 of the 2023 Work Plan priorities were transitioned to operational action items that the agency continued to monitor throughout the 2024 calendar year (CY). A senior IHS leader was identified as responsible for implementing the corrective actions and reporting results to the IHS leadership team. The responsible IHS leader set out objectives and milestones for implementing corrective actions, tracking progress for each activity, and looked for sustained progress over time. The goal was to complete the actions in the 2024 Agency Work Plan by December 31, 2024.

Status: In October 2024, senior leadership from across the IHS convened in Rapid City, South Dakota, to continue our collaborative work to address the most pressing issues facing the agency today. Executive leadership from national headquarters, area directors, and other agency leaders discussed progress toward the IHS 2024 Work Plan priorities, continued refining our strategic plan, participated in robust decision making on matters affecting IHS, and participated in leadership training. This convening continues the agency's commitment to bringing top leaders together to strategically address challenges facing the IHS, as well as championing the progress made toward our strategic goals.

In CY 2024, IHS reached the goals, milestones, and targets for five out of 15 priorities in the 2024 Agency Work Plan, and four priorities neared (>90%) reaching goals and targets. Results of the work were made public for our tribal and urban Indian organization partners and stakeholders' awareness. IHS provided quarterly updates on the progress of the Work Plan through the [IHS Work Plan Status Report](#). IHS leadership is committed to providing improved transparency and clarity on information and initiatives that were undertaken by the IHS, as well as in coordination with our partnering agencies.

As we move forward into 2025 and close out the Work Plan, we will now transition our priorities and goals to align with the new IHS Strategic Plan Years 2025 - 2029. I encourage you to check out the [IHS Strategic Plan for FYs 2025-2029](#) that describes what the agency hopes to achieve over the next five years, based on the participation and feedback we received from tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian organizations, IHS staff, and other stakeholders.

Fourth Quarter Work Plan and Operational Priority Accomplishments:

- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL): Sanitation Facilities Construction (SFC) –**
 - The Division of Sanitation Facilities Construction (DSFC) completed its first cycle of its new engineer internship program through an innovative partnership with the Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education. Sixteen engineer interns completed work assignments between May and August 2024 at IHS locations throughout the U.S. Internship biographies were gathered from participating interns and shared as part of DSFC marketing and recruitment to identify additional engineer candidates.
 - To address significant challenges in recruiting and retaining well-qualified engineers, the IHS and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) worked together to secure a Title V Special Salary Rate for DSFC engineers. Effective December 15, 2024, DSFC general engineers, civil engineers, and environmental engineers stationed at certain hard-to-fill locations will receive higher rates of basic pay across the General Schedule pay system.
 - The DSFC program partnered with the Office of Human Resources and OPM to establish new organizational Standard Administrative Codes to effectively track DSFC staffing metrics nationally in real time.

- **Employee Wellbeing and Resiliency –**
 - On December 31, 2024, Part 4, Chapter 9, [Employee Wellness Program Policy](#), Indian Health Manual, was published to encourage healthier lifestyle choices, emphasizing physical activity, balanced nutrition, preventive care, and activities that support emotional, mental, and social health.
 - Two cohorts of the Stress Management and Resiliency Training were launched, equipping employees with effective tools to manage stress and enhance mental health. Personal stories from current employees were incorporated to highlight wellness and resilience, adding a relatable and inspiring element to the training sessions.
 - An Employee Wellness SharePoint website has been designed to create an intuitive and accessible platform where employees can quickly find and navigate essential wellness resources.

- **Improve Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) Operations –**
 - Since January 2024, the ISDEAA training series has featured more than 52 different in-house subject matter experts that have delivered more than 28 unique training sessions on various ISDEAA-related topics.
 - On October 10, 2024, a [Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader Letter](#) announced tribal consultation and urban confer to seek recommendations on the proposed reorganization of the IHS Headquarters Office of the Director, which impacts the structure of offices under the Deputy Director for Intergovernmental Affairs. A key component of the proposed reorganization is the initiative of One IHS, which aims to improve effectiveness and efficiency across the agency through greater coordination

and collaboration. The comment submission deadline was extended to December 20, 2024.

- On November 12, 2024, a [Dear Tribal Leader Letter](#) announced the updated IHS [Tribal Consultation Policy](#), reflecting over three years of collaboration with tribal leaders through tribal consultation, alongside the efforts of the IHS [Director's Advisory Workgroup on Tribal Consultation](#). This update aligns with the requirements of [Executive Order 13175](#), "Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments".
 - The ISDEAA All Federal Staff Meeting was held from December 3-5, 2024, in Rapid City, South Dakota. Along with members of our senior leadership team, it was an opportunity to engage in open and meaningful dialogue with lead negotiators and to support ongoing efforts to give tribes greater control over the delivery of health care services.
 - On December 20, 2024, a [Dear Tribal Leader Letter](#) announced the agency's decisions on how the IHS will calculate Contract Support Costs on expenditures of third-party reimbursements and provided next steps.
- **Design a Policy Review Process - Policy Management System** – The revised [Part 1, Chapter 1, IHS Manual System](#), was published on October 24, 2024. This Chapter standardizes and establishes the policy, procedures, and responsibilities for developing, revising, and managing IHS headquarters offices, area offices, and service units' directives. Training was developed on the Chapter to inform IHS federal employees where to find information and how to interpret the policy.
 - **Purchased/Referred Care (PRC) Authorization and Payment Process** –
 - In October 2024, a [PRC fact sheet](#) was developed to address recent improvements and agency initiatives to enhance the PRC program, and is published on the IHS website monthly.
 - On December 12, 2024, a [letter](#) to tribal leaders and urban Indian organization leaders reaffirmed IHS's commitment to protecting our patients and improving the PRC program. Through a [joint letter](#), the IHS and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau announced its collaboration to protect eligible PRC patients receiving IHS-approved medical services from being subjected to improper bills from medical providers and collection activities from debt collectors.
 - **PRC Carryover** – On October 7, 2024, the IHS conducted a virtual training session to provide a comprehensive overview of the IHS 2024 Updated PRC Medical Priorities Plan. This session was intended for area and service unit administrators, clinical staff, PRC staff, and others involved in the PRC referral process.
 - **Standardized Credentialing System** – On October 11, 2024, IHS published updates to the [Indian Health Manual, Part 3 Professional Services, Chapter 1 Clinical Credentials and Privileges](#) and the [IHS Credentialing and Privileging Standard Operating Procedure manual](#). These updates enhance patient safety and align with other IHS policies, credentialing and privileging regulatory, accrediting, and industry standards. The policy and manual are elements of the [IHS Total](#)

[System Safety Strategy \(TSS\) Strategy](#), a roadmap for developing an overarching, agency-wide patient safety program.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan –**
 - In October 2024, IHS leadership participated in the Department of Health and Human Services Partnership MOU Signing Ceremony with California State University, Long Beach, which expands recruitment and outreach efforts to this Historically Hispanic Serving Institution, to attract students to careers in IHS hard-to-fill occupations.
 - From October to November 2024, the IHS hosted and participated in several recruitment events, including an IHS-wide Virtual Career Fair, American Indian Science and Engineering Society, HHS Enterprise-wide Career Fair, University of Oklahoma, and Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Virtual Veterans Career Fair.
 - From October 21-31, 2024, the IHS hosted a series of Disability Awareness sessions for IHS employees on a number of topics.

- **Implement Workforce Development Plan –**
 - The IHS announced 30 IHS employees were nominated by their leadership to participate in cohort 2 of the 2024-2025 Executive Development Program (EDP). The EDP is a one-year program targeted towards new Senior Executive Service and managers focusing on executive core qualifications, providing leadership assessments, coaching, and mentoring, and requiring the completion of a group action learning project to address agency strategic planning.
 - In November 2024, IHS developed a new IHS Training Corner Quarterly Newsletter, to be distributed agency-wide. This is an innovative way to connect and share training updates and learning opportunities to the workforce.
 - IHS participated in the OPM Federal Executive Institute Leadership for a Democratic Society, sending five IHS employees to this elite program to prepare leaders for senior executive positions.
 - IHS partnered with HHS to secure one slot for a graduate from cohort 1 of the EDP to participate in the Federal Internal Coaching Training Program to support an enhanced coaching culture.

- **Strategic Plan for FYs 2025-2029 –** On December 5, 2024, IHS released its [Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2025-2029](#). The IHS Strategic Plan reflects critical priorities of the agency over the next five years, demonstrating our commitment to improving health care service delivery and enhancing critical public health services throughout the health system to raise the health status of our tribal communities.

January 2025