



Indian Health Service Human Capital Operating Plan

FY 2024 - 2028



Office of Human Resources

Indian Health Service

Indian Health Service Office of Human Resources

Mission and Vision

Our Mission – To diligently focus on customer service and continuously improve human resources at IHS. To foster a work environment characterized by diversity, fairness, personal accountability, trust, and mutual respect.

Our Vision - To provide outstanding and innovative human resources services to the IHS workforce.



Table of Contents

Overview - FY2024-2028 IHS Human Capital Operating Plan	3
Background and Purpose	4
OHR Goals	6
Goal 1 - Promote Efficiency in Human Resources Operations	6
Strategy 1a – Automate Additional Processes to Improve HR Related Services	6
Strategy 1b – Maximize Effectiveness of OHR Budget.....	6
Strategy 1c – Expand Analytics to Support Decision Making.....	7
Strategy 1d – Streamline Background Investigations	7
Strategy 1e – Evaluate Human Resources Service Delivery and Outcomes	8
Goal 2 - Provide Strong Recruitment and Retention Strategies	8
Strategy 2a – Support Sanitation Facilities Construction Centralized Hiring.....	8
Strategy 2b – Develop Pipeline Programs to Meet IHS’s Long-Term Needs	9
Strategy 2c – Partner with Federal Agencies and Outside Organizations to Adopt Best Practices....	11
Strategy 2d – Cultivate a Culture of Inclusion, Engagement and Wellness	12
Goal 3 - Provide Sound and Accessible Human Resources Guidance	12
Strategy 3a – Strengthen Human Resources Guidance	12
Strategy 3b – Develop and Execute OHR Knowledge Management Strategy	12
Strategy 3c – Develop Human Resources Staff.....	13
Appendix 1 – HCOP Tracker FY2024-2025	14
Appendix 2 - IHS 2023 Agency Work Plan	17

Overview - FY2024-2028 IHS Human Capital Operating Plan

In my role as the Indian Health Service's (IHS's) Chief Human Capital Officer, I am pleased to provide the IHS Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2028 Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP, or Plan). With an ever increasing demand for quality healthcare services in society and the high-performing staff needed to deliver these services, it is critical that the IHS proactively plan to ensure an IHS workforce that can fulfill IHS's healthcare mission. A well-managed and thriving workforce is critical to accomplishing the IHS mission.

The IHS FY 2024-2028 HCOP serves as a strategic roadmap for the numerous products, services, and human resources solutions that manage the life cycle of the IHS workforce. The Plan lays out three overarching goals and specific strategies to support the IHS mission and vision. Each strategy in this Plan supports one or more of the goals in the draft FY 2024-2028 IHS Strategic Plan and also aligns to the draft FY 2022-2026 United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) HCOP.

Each goal has underlying strategies that the Office of Human Resources (OHR) will assess twice per year. Specific deliverables and accompanying completion dates have been included for most strategies. OHR's regular review of the Plan's strategies and deliverables will inform our progress towards meeting the Plan's goals and will support OHR decision making in the future. OHR will add and remove strategies and specific deliverables to achieve the HCOP's goals during the twice-yearly assessments. A HCOP tracker is included at Appendix 1 and lists deliverables expected to be accomplished in FY 2024-2025. OHR will continue to develop deliverables and completion timeframes as time progresses.

I look forward to working with Headquarters (HQ) and Area staff to meet the goals and strategies identified in the FY 2024-2028 IHS HCOP to ensure that the IHS HR enterprise continues to effectively support the IHS mission.

Thank you for your continued support on behalf of the IHS and the IHS patients.

*Lisa Gyorda
Chief Human Capital Officer
Director, Office of Human Resources
Deputy Ethics Counselor
Indian Health Service*



Background and Purpose

The IHS has an enduring mission to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level. Specifically, IHS is responsible for providing health services to members of federally-recognized tribes and is the principal health care provider and health advocate for Indian people. The IHS provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately **2.6 million** American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to **574** federally recognized tribes in **37** states.

With approximately **15,000** employees serving in various mission-critical positions across the country, the IHS's dedicated and skilled workforce is vital to implementing the functions that ensure the agency's success. Additionally, in the continuing wake of the global COVID 19 pandemic, the IHS has faced unprecedented changes to how work is accomplished. Human capital management practices have continued to adjust to new ways of doing business. The global COVID 19 pandemic changed the workplace, recruitment outreach efforts, talent development, and the work-life balance. The IHS HCOP addresses identified gaps between current and future HR capabilities that will enable IHS to meet these evolving workplace needs and, thereby, help to achieve the IHS mission.



The Plan's goals and strategies are based on the direction set by the draft FY 2024-2028 IHS Strategic Plan and the draft FY 2022-2026 HHS HCOP. The IHS HCOP contains the following three goals:

- Goal 1 - Promote Efficiency in Human Resources Operations
- Goal 2 - Provide Strong Recruitment and Retention Strategies
- Goal 3 - Provide Sound and Accessible Human Resources Guidance

The IHS FY2024–2028 HCOP serves as a roadmap to support successful planning and implementation of strategic initiatives for workforce management. Over its five-year time period, the Plan's goals and strategies may change depending on IHS needs. The HCOP will be reviewed annually, strategies will be assessed, and the HCOP will be updated as appropriate.



OHR Goals

Goal 1 - Promote Efficiency in Human Resources Operations

Strategy 1a – Automate Additional Processes to Improve HR Related Services

Like many Federal agencies, IHS still has many processes that are not managed and tracked via an information technology (IT) solution. Some processes are dependent on paper or PDF documents which can cause delays, administrative burdens, and scarce reliable data. Within the bounds of IHS's and HHS's technical system capabilities, OHR will look to automate additional processes as quickly as possible. In collaboration with IHS stakeholders, OHR will identify and prioritize the processes most in need of automating to enhance HR service delivery.



Deliverables:

- *Develop automated scholarship system*
- *Develop system to automate tracking of U.S. Commissioned Corps tasks and activities*
- *Develop automated SF-181 training form and authorization process*

Strategy 1b – Maximize Effectiveness of OHR Budget

With the addition of two new Deputy Directors in OHR, OHR plans to increase its focus and attention on the various phases of the IHS budget process to ensure that OHR maximizes its financial resources to further the OHR and IHS missions. As needed, OHR will take proactive measures to develop and augment management controls to ensure the proper stewardship of resources. These controls may include delineating the use terms of all funds used by OHR, and developing a system to plan for and monitor the use of Recruitment, Retention, and other funds. Attention will also be dedicated to identify a process regarding the de-obligation of loans and scholarship funds to ensure funds are used efficiently.

Deliverables:

- *Train OHR staff to oversee Interagency Agreements and to become Contracting Officer Representatives*

Strategy 1c – Expand Analytics to Support Decision Making

HR Dashboard - In an agency as widely dispersed and varied as IHS, it is important that IHS leadership have easily accessible data on a variety of HR issues in order to support sound decision making. To foster easy access to timely and relevant HR data, OHR has created an HR dashboard that provides a variety of metrics on HR-related matters including background investigation cases, employee relations cases, Commissioned Officers accessions/separations, and retirement eligibility data.

Deliverables:

- *Create regular report of U.S. Commissioned Corps metrics*
- *Deliver training to Area HR offices on the HR Dashboard*

Expansion of IHS Exit Survey - OHR will continue to expand and fine-tune the IHS exit survey to determine departing employees' reasons for leaving and their thoughts on their work with IHS. The results of the survey will be used to make needed changes to address retention challenges noted by the survey.

Deliverable:

- *Determine cadence and best format to report exit survey results*

Other Deliverables:

- *Develop employee relations/labor relations reports that go beyond the HR Dashboard and can be pulled from the HRx system*
- *Create analytics pulled the USA Performance system to distribute to senior staff*

Strategy 1d – Streamline Background Investigations

Background Investigation Process – OHR successfully reduced over 5,000 pending background investigation cases to less than 1,100 by early 2023. OHR will continue to

make strategic hiring decisions and to revamp internal processes to prevent future case backlogs, and ensure the rapid completion of cases. The HQ OHR Division of Personnel Security is hiring four to five additional adjudicators and attaining two separate resource contracts for Federal and contract employees to expedite the completion of background investigations. Better tracking systems are in place to monitor the workload. OHR provides metrics to leadership on a daily basis.

Deliverable:

- *Conduct personnel security reviews for all Areas beginning in FY 2024*

Strategy 1e – Evaluate Human Resources Service Delivery and Outcomes

OHR will focus on promoting significant improvement to the delivery of HR services across IHS through the use of targeted evaluations and quality reviews of HR services. Continual feedback to IHS senior staff and Area leadership regarding these reviews will inform cross-IHS consideration of how to address any identified deficiencies.

Deliverables:

- *Conduct review of Regional/Area human resources offices with a focus on one or more functional HR areas*
- *Conduct one HR functional program review, e.g., a compensation authority, Indian Preference, succession planning, or housing subsidies*

Goal 2 - Provide Strong Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Strategy 2a – Support Sanitation Facilities Construction Centralized Hiring

Efficiency in Hiring Sanitation Facilities and Construction Staff – OHR established a new OHR team in 2022 to perform the classification, compensation, and staffing activities needed to support the IHS Sanitation and Facilities Construction (SFC) program based on new funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This is the first centralized large-scale recruitment effort at IHS. The effort required significant collaboration with other IHS offices and the use of creative HR flexibilities such as the provision of a group retention incentive for all SFC positions. OHR staff have had to keep abreast of engineering workforce issues and have collaborated with the Commissioned Corps HQ staff in fulfilling this important hiring need. This type of centralized hiring may serve as a prototype for other critical hiring efforts in the future so it is important that OHR devote sufficient attention to fine tuning this hiring approach so that future efforts may benefit as well from the program’s continual improvement.

Deliverables:

- *Ensure that the OHR team supporting the IHS SFC program is fully staffed*
- *Hire needed staff under the IHS SFC effort*

Strategy 2b – Develop Pipeline Programs to Meet IHS’s Long-Term Needs

New Program Development - IHS is continually challenged by higher compensation levels offered by non-Federal employers and the IHS rural and remote work sites which makes recruiting and retaining staff difficult. The IHS must ensure that it has the talent to address evolving mission requirements by planning for and cultivating a talent pipeline for the most critical agency needs. Not all pipeline talent programs may be managed by OHR and may fall under the responsibility of another HQ or Area office. Brainstorming the realm of possibilities in terms of ways to recruit new talent is key to meeting future workforce demands.



Deliverables:

- *Support IHS residency and fellowship programs as effective talent pipelines by establishing appropriate compensation levels*
- *Revise Headquarters volunteer program documentation and explore IHS-wide implementation*

IHS Loan Repayment Program and Student Loan Repayment Program – OHR has fostered a strong collaboration with the National Health Service Corps that resulted in 1,110 Loan Repayment program participants serving at IHS hospitals and clinics, tribally-run health clinics, and urban Indian health clinics in FY 2022. The IHS Loan Repayment Program, which grants loan repayment awards up to \$25,000, helps IHS clinicians repay their eligible health profession education loans in exchange for a service commitment.

OHR is also developing the new IHS Student Loan Repayment Program which will allow IHS to repay employees’ or job candidates’ student loans up to \$10,000 per year with a \$60,000 lifetime limit.

Deliverable:

- *Develop standard operating procedure for the IHS Student Loan Repayment Program*

Current IHS Scholarship Program – The IHS Scholarship Program received 784 new applications, awarded 159 new applications, and awarded 159 scholarship extensions in FY 2022. The IHS Scholarship Program provides financial support to eligible students in exchange for a service commitment. OHR will continue to actively promote the IHS Scholarship Program.

Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (COSTEP) – Senior and Junior

The Senior and Junior COSTEP programs attract qualified students in accredited programs leading to a commissionable degree to careers in the Public Health Service (PHS). Students may be appointed and placed on active duty as commissioned officers in the reserve corps during the summer of their senior (last) year of study with pay in exchange for an agreement to serve as PHS commissioned officers. OHR will actively promote COSTEP opportunities as a means to recruit talented candidates to serve as Commissioned Officers with IHS. OHR plans to identify additional mechanisms that would support Tribal participation in both programs to continue to build the PHS and IHS Corps.

Deliverable:

- *Expand participation of COSTEP programs to tribes*



Strategy 2c – Partner with Federal Agencies and Outside Organizations to Adopt Best Practices

IHS greatly benefits from use of the Title 38 pay authorities for its healthcare staff received via an OPM-HHS Delegation Agreement. With very similar healthcare missions, the IHS and U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) often compete for the healthcare staff in similar locations. In the spirit of cross-Federal government collaboration, the IHS has benefited by emulating some of the VA's progress and innovative recruitment and retention tactics. The OHR will also continue to advocate for a level playing field with the VA in terms of hiring and compensation flexibilities granted. The OHR will also reach out to other agencies such as OPM and the Commissioned Corps Headquarters as needed to help with IHS recruitment and retention needs.

Deliverable:

- *Develop action plan to adopt the VA's Total Rewards program in IHS*

Strategy 2d – Cultivate a Culture of Inclusion, Engagement and Wellness

With a changing workplace, IHS must use strategies to address employee needs and preferences through work-life strategies. Employees sometimes leave their IHS positions to take positions with more generous leave benefits or more flexible work hours that enable employees to better meet their personal needs. IHS has continued to advocate for additional leave benefits for healthcare staff, and is piloting work schedule and housing subsidy programs. OHR will continue to look for opportunities to incentivize employees to either come or stay at IHS through performance recognition, development opportunities and workplace flexibilities.

Deliverables:

- *Adopt IHS-wide approach on the use of alternative work schedules*
- *Partner with IHS Chief Medical Officer to strategize on IHS wellness plan*
- *Provide training to additional Areas interested in housing subsidy program*

Goal 3 - Provide Sound and Accessible Human Resources Guidance

Strategy 3a – Strengthen Human Resources Guidance

HR Policies, Procedures and Delegations of Authority – All HR actions taken across IHS are in accordance with guidance available to HR staff. Easily accessible and up-to-date guidance promotes consistency and accuracy in HR actions. OHR will continue to evaluate existing guidance for needed updates and will create new content to advise OHR customers on programmatic features and requirements.

Deliverables:

- *Develop standard operating procedures for two HR processes*
- *Finalize Memorandum of Agreement and IHS Circular for Commissioned Officers assigned to tribal facilities*

Strategy 3b – Develop and Execute OHR Knowledge Management Strategy

OHR Knowledge Management – OHR has made progress in terms of updating its content on the OHR website. OHR launched a revised and improved OHR website in late 2021 and efforts are ongoing to improve and expand the site's content. Area staff have commented on the utility of the site to access policy and procedural guidance on a

multitude of HR topics. In an expansion of this effort, a wider look at how OHR stores and makes guidance available is needed. In addition to the OHR website, HR documents are housed on the IHS intranet, the IHS Hiring Tool Kit, various SharePoint sites, and the shared drive at HQ. OHR must establish a protocol for how guidance will be stored, be made available to its users, and regularly reviewed for needed updates.

Deliverable:

- *Launch augmented staffing section on the OHR website*

Strategy 3c – Develop Human Resources Staff

New Training Initiatives – It is essential that the IHS HR community have well-trained and high-performing HR specialists and assistants in order to address challenging HR issues and ready the workforce for the future. One of the key elements is to hire and train new HR staff. One of the initiatives to accomplish this is by establishing a junior HR training program. OHR will develop a training strategy for all HR specialists to ensure that staff have strong foundational HR skills.

Deliverables:

- *Reorganize DCPS to ensure succession planning and staff development opportunities*
- *Reestablish an HR training program*



Appendix 1 – HCOP Tracker FY2024-2025

IHS HCOP Goals/Strategies	Deliverables	FY24		FY25		Complete?
		Q2	Q4	Q2	Q4	
Goal 1. Promote Efficiency in Human Resources Operations						
1a. Automate Additional Processes to Improve HR Related Services	Develop automated scholarship system				X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Develop system to automate tracking of U.S. Commissioned Corps tasks and activities				X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Develop automated SF-181 training form and authorization process			X		<input type="checkbox"/>
1b. Maximize Effectiveness of OHR Budget	Train OHR staff to oversee Interagency Agreements and to become Contracting Officer Representatives		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Develop plan to reduce prior year funding for Indian Health Professions programs		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
1c. Expand Analytics to Support Decision Making	Create regular report of Commissioned Corps metrics	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Deliver training to Area HR offices on the HR Dashboard			X		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Determine cadence and best format to report exit survey results		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Develop ER/LR reports that go beyond the HR dashboard and can be pulled from HRx		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Create analytics pulled from the USAP system to distribute to senior staff			X		<input type="checkbox"/>

IHS HCOP Goals/Strategies	Deliverables	FY24		FY25		Complete?
		Q2	Q4	Q2	Q4	
1d. Streamline Background Investigations	Conduct personnel security reviews for all Areas beginning in FY 2024				X	<input type="checkbox"/>
1e. Evaluate Human Resources Service Delivery and Outcomes	Conduct review of Regional/Area human resources offices with a focus on one or more functional HR areas	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conduct national HR functional program review, e.g. a compensation authority, Indian Preference, succession planning, or housing subsidies			X		<input type="checkbox"/>
Goal 2. Provide Strong Recruitment and Retention Strategies						
2a. Support Sanitation Facilities Construction Centralized Hiring	Ensure that the OHR team supporting the IHS SFC program is fully staffed	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hire needed staff under the IHS SFC effort				X	<input type="checkbox"/>
2b. Develop Pipeline Programs to Meet IHS's Long-Term Needs	Support IHS residency and fellowship programs as effective talent pipelines by establishing appropriate compensation levels		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Revise current headquarters volunteer program documentation and explore IHS-wide implementation		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Develop standard operating procedure for the IHS Student Loan Repayment Program	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Expand participation of COSTEP programs to tribes			X		<input type="checkbox"/>

IHS HCOP Goals/Strategies	Deliverables	FY24		FY25		Complete?
		Q2	Q4	Q2	Q4	
2c. Partner with Federal Agencies and Outside Organizations to Adopt Best Practices	Develop action plan to adopt the VA's Total Rewards program in IHS			X		<input type="checkbox"/>
2d. Cultivate a Culture of Inclusion, Engagement and Wellness	Adopt IHS-wide approach on the use of alternative work schedules	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Partner with CMO to strategize on wellness plan	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Provide training to additional Areas interested in the housing subsidy program			X		<input type="checkbox"/>
Goal 3. Provide Sound and Accessible Human Resources Guidance						
3a. Strengthen Human Resources Guidance	Develop standard operating procedures for two HR processes		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Finalize MOA and IHS circular for Commissioned Officers assigned to tribal facilities		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
3b. Develop and Execute OHR Knowledge Management Strategy	Launch augmented staffing section on the OHR website		X			<input type="checkbox"/>
3c. Develop Human Resources Staff	Reorganize DCPS to ensure succession planning and staff development opportunities	X				<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reestablish an HR training program				X	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2 - IHS 2023 Agency Work Plan

<h1 style="margin: 0;">2023 Agency Work Plan</h1>	PRIORITIES
	<p>Patient Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardize patient safety and adverse event policies. ▪ Enhance standardization of the credentialing system. ▪ Enhance facility manager and safety officer training agency-wide.
	<p>Human Capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further develop the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility program. ▪ Improve personnel security operations. ▪ Implement a workforce development plan. ▪ Implement a workforce wellness plan that aligns with retention efforts.
	<p>Operational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the acquisition planning process. ▪ Expand Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act training. ▪ Improve internal and external communication. ▪ Improve the policy clearance process. ▪ Assess for the most effective human resources structure.
	<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further develop a national 105(<i>I</i>) lease program. ▪ Improve the Purchased/Referred Care financial process.
	<p>Compliance/Regulatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement governance standardization across the agency. ▪ Ensure a foundation of enterprise risk management.
	<p>Strategic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manage an adaptable strategy and long term plan. ▪ Enhance partnerships with tribes and urban Indian organizations ▪ Enhance the sharing of data across the Indian health system.