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Award of an $198,000 contract to Price, Waterhouse & Co. to aid the efforts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to bring integrity in the use and control of funds to the Bureau's financial and accounting systems was announced today by Interior Assistant Secretary Forrest Gerard.

Gerard said "Project Integrity" is at the heart of a general Bureau overhaul to clarify how funds are used and their purchasing power in programs and services designed to benefit the Indian people. The scope of the contracted project ranges from improvement of financial recording and reporting systems to development of program performance standards, and will establish administrative programmatic review techniques.

"At my confirmation hearing," Gerard recalled, "I promised the Senate Committee and the Indian people that the BIA would address questions about the effective use and control of BIA money. To fulfill this promise, I have initiated 'Project Integrity.' This contract award to Price, Waterhouse is a major step toward achievement of 'Project Integrity' goals: attainment of the highest standard in BIA fiscal management and significant improvement in the federal-Indian delivery system."

In April of this year, the Assistant Secretary informed the BIA field staff of his "Project Integrity" plans, explaining that, while much of the work would be done by BIA staff, "outside expertise is also needed to bring to the Project an unbiased, objective and broad-based perspective."

Work under the contract is planned for four phases: 1) information gathering and identification of needs and problems, to be conducted through extensive consultation with tribal personnel and BIA staff; 2) improving the financial recording and reporting systems; 3) designing program performance measures and reporting systems; and 4) developing standards and procedures for administrative and programmatic reviews.