



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

SEP 23 2021

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Department of the Interior continually strives to excel in its accounting and investing of Indian financial trust assets. For over a year now, the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) has been performing all the operational duties related to this function. The issuance of Secretary's Order 3384 on September 1, 2020, formally moved the functions and personnel of the Office of Special Trust for American Indians (OST) to BTFA.

Please join me at one or both of the following consultation sessions to discuss how BTFA can carry out its duties most effectively and improve customer service. Please find enclosed a framing paper with some questions for discussion.

Monday, November 1, 2021

10 a.m. to 12 p.m. ET

Please register in advance at:

<https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlscOCuqDsiHXJZPMYvqQYeMFum2M4ApmI>

Thursday, November 4, 2021

2 p.m. to 4 p.m. ET

Please register in advance at:

https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJltdOurqT0sEl8P3BsMG7uF_ufewTfc8p4

I also welcome you to submit any written comments to consultation@btfa.gov by 11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, November 12, 2021.

I look forward to speaking with you. If you have any questions regarding this effort in the meantime, please feel free to contact Mr. Lee Frazier – Congressional Liaison, by phone at (202) 368-5104 or by email at lee-frazier@btfa.gov.

Sincerely,

Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

Enclosure

Tribal Consultation Framing Paper

The Future of BTFA and OST: Plans for Future Operations

The Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) has been performing all the operational duties related to the accounting and investing of Indian financial trust assets since September 2020, when a Secretary's Order transferred those Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) functions to BTFA.¹ The Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs seeks Tribal input through formal Tribal consultation on the future of both BTFA and OST. As a starting point for discussions, the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs poses the following questions to Tribes:

Question 1: In addition to its day-to-day duties of trust funds management, what (if any) roles do you envision for BTFA in the future?

- Should BTFA do more to promote financial literacy?
- Are there other roles BTFA should fulfill related to trust funds management?

Question 2: What are your thoughts on proposed BTFA modernization efforts?

- BTFA is considering innovations to make accessing trust accounts more convenient (online access to trust accounts; kiosks providing access to trust accounts) and to make storing trust records more efficient and cost-effective (digitization of trust records now stored at the AIRR facility). What are your thoughts on these potential innovations?
- What other innovations would you like to see BTFA implement to improve customer service to Tribal and individual Indian beneficiaries?
- What other innovations would you like to see to make storage and maintenance of trust records more efficient and cost-effective?

Question 3: Is there a future trust reform role for OST?

- The 1994 Act that created OST also provides for the termination of the office after “all reforms identified in the strategic plan have been implemented to the satisfaction of the Special Trustee.” But the law also provides that the Special Trustee may recommend the continuation, or the permanent establishment, of OST if he or she concludes that continuation or permanent establishment is necessary for the efficient discharge of the Secretary's trust responsibilities. Most major trust reforms mandated by the 1994 Act are either completed or nearing completion, so BTFA (instead of OST) is now performing the ongoing daily operations related to the management of Indian financial trust assets. Is there a useful role for OST to play in overseeing future trust reforms?

Directions for Submitting Comments

Please submit any comments you have for BTFA's plan to: consultation@btfa.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 12, 2021.

¹ On September 1, 2020, Secretary's Order No. 3384 formally moved the functions and personnel of the Office of Special Trust for American Indians (OST) to BTFA. OST still exists nominally, but it has no personnel and is not responsible for any functions.