



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

MAY - 8 2023

Dear Tribal Leader:

I invite you to a consultation on June 20, 2023, on Tribal data priorities. Ensuring quality data is available to inform policy making, resource distributions and effective program management is critical to advancing the well-being of Indian Country. This fact was made clear in attempts to determine needs for tribal communities during the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic and then in efforts to decide on fair, equitable and transparent payments to tribes.

To make progress on this need for improved data, an Indian Country Data Working Group (ICDWG) was established among Federal Agencies to identify shared goals and actions which could be presented to Tribes in consultation. The goals and actions address a spectrum of efforts including: ensuring Tribal sovereignty is recognized upfront in all our practices, improving quality of existing data, creating new data sources, increasing capability to integrate data, and producing new data driven research products.

Previous Tribal consultations on data included comments about the importance of respect for Tribal data sovereignty. To address this concern, the goals and actions are presented to Tribes as part of an initial strategy. The goals and actions below span from more technical efforts to improve data quality, to collection of new data sources and finally development of economic and programmatic research projects. All the proposed efforts lead toward better availability and use of data to improve decision making, resource distribution and program management which is needed to advance the well-being of Indian Country.

Accompanying this letter is a description of shared priority areas identified by Federal partners. During the consultation, Indian Affairs and Federal partners will provide a brief summary of the proposed shared goals and actions. We are seeking feedback on the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed priority goals and actions?
- Are there any changes you would make?
- Are there additional priorities which we should consider?

This consultation is especially important as we see increased use of supplemental funding bills to meet the needs of Indian Country that depend on some of these data points, and to ensure we improve our data across government in a way that respects Tribal sovereignty and priorities.

Please join us at the following consultation session:

Date	Time	Location
Tuesday, June 20, 2023	3:00 p.m. EDT	Virtual Meeting Please register in advance for this meeting: https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIsf-ChrzkgGwVRYCT44iQQyuDcWy3_0BI

If you would like to provide written comments, please submit them by 11:59 p.m. EDT, July 20, 2023. Comments must be identified as “Tribal Data Priorities.” If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Veronica Lane by email at: veronica.lane@bia.gov.

I look forward to your input on these proposed shared goals and actions to improve data quality and availability needed to advance Indian Country.

Sincerely,



Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

Enclosure

Indian Country Data Working Group's Data Priorities

Ensuring quality data is available to inform federal and tribal policy making, resource distributions and effective program management is critical to advancing the well-being of Indian Country. This fact was made clear during the COVID-19 pandemic as Agencies worked to ensure fair, equitable and transparent payments to tribes.

To make progress on this need for improved data, an Indian Country Data Working Group (ICDWG) was established among Federal Agencies to identify shared goals and actions which could be presented to tribes in consultation. The goals and actions address a spectrum of efforts, including ensuring tribal sovereignty is recognized upfront in all our practices, improving quality of existing data, creating new data sources, and producing new data-driven research products. Previous tribal consultations on data included comments about the importance of respect for tribal data sovereignty. To address this concern, the goals and actions are presented to Tribes as part of an initial strategy.

The goals and actions below span from more technical efforts to improve data quality, to collection of new data sources, and, finally, the development of economic and programmatic research projects. All the proposed efforts lead toward better availability and use of data to improve decision making, resource distribution and program management, which is needed to advance the well-being of Indian Country.

Shared Goals and Actions

Enhance Data Sharing and Access in a Manner Consistent with Tribal Sovereignty

- Improve capacity to balance tribal sovereignty with Open Data requirements and the ability to improve program delivery for Indian Country
 - Clarify policy and develop best practices, such as standard data sharing agreements
 - Establish a Tribal Data Advisory Board

Improve Data Quality and Integration

- Adopt a standard, unique tribal identifier to use across datasets
- Advance standards for geospatial information management
 - Enhance standardization for geospatial data development, production, management, discovery, access, sharing, visualization, and analysis.
 - Define the governance of geospatial tribal datasets, roles, and responsibilities across all stakeholders.
 - Reestablish the Tribal Spatial Data Infrastructure work group under the Federal Geographic Data Committee.
 - As appropriate, align geographic boundaries across spatial datasets of tribal geographies (i.e., those used in BIA, Census Bureau, and others). This could include BIA and Census Bureau synching their boundary validation process, where possible, and enhancing BIA geospatial capabilities.

- Develop a list of which Tribal entities are affiliated with which Tribal geographies. For example, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey tribal data pertains to individuals living within an American Indian Area Geography but doesn't provide information on which tribes are associated with a geography. Sometimes it is obvious from the name of the geographic entity, but not always.
- Develop standard language for differentiating between datasets where data is collected based on geography (individuals living within a tribal geography, regardless of tribal affiliation) and datasets where data is collected based on affiliation (individuals affiliated with a tribe, regardless of where they reside). This would be helpful for merging different datasets.
- Improve engagement with Tribes to increase participation in Census Bureau surveys, including the American Community Survey
- Increase refresh rate of the BIA Tribal leader directory
- Explore opportunities to check Census Bureau's 2020 Decennial data for tribal affiliation self-identification against BIA enrollment data to help validate Decennial data

Create New Data Sources

- Collect tribal government revenues and expenditures to improve understanding of the economic impact of tribes, starting with a potential pilot effort with willing tribes
- Collect Tribal Enrollment Data annually
- Explore developing a tribal service population dataset
- Explore with tribes in allowing the Census Bureau to receive their administrative records through a Memorandum of Agreement

Develop Key Economic and Program Research Products

- Conduct parity assessments for levels of funding (ongoing)
 - An example would be Federal Funds support per student at Tribal Colleges and Universities, as compared to the average land grant university
- Monitor and engage in the Census Bureau's work on disclosure avoidance modernization and how this is implemented for different Census Bureau products.
- Document best practices for how to integrate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) into data collection, management and use policies, as well as policy making practices.
- Incentivize tribal government actions to increase participation in Census Bureau surveys by providing products that show the benefit of accurate representation in Census Bureau statistics
- Assess economic impact of tribal economies on rural economies and national economies
- Highlight successful use of Tribal Economic Development (TED) Bonds, identifying characteristics of accepted/rejected applications and how much money is requested Provide an in-depth analysis on economic disparities (such as poverty rates) between American Indian/Native Alaskan individuals and other populations
- Assess the employment or business creation because of Buy Indian Act Authorities acquisitions
- Assess Paycheck Protection funds benefiting tribal businesses on and off reservation
- Assess employment/unemployment trends at tribal levels