

Overview of the Tiwahe Initiative

Background

Tiwahe (ti-wah-hay) means family in the Lakota language and symbolizes the interconnectedness of all living things and one's personal responsibility to protect family, community, and the environment. In an effort to empower federally recognized Tribes to realize this potential, Indian Affairs (IA) launched the Tiwahe Initiative in fiscal year FY 2015. The Initiative is made up of several components, which work together to protect and promote the development of prosperous and resilient Tribal communities. Since FY 2015, the Tiwahe Initiative has focused primarily on promoting family stability through several Human Services programs and a small amount of funding from Public Safety and Justice for recidivism and tribal courts.

Family stability, community safety, and economic opportunity are fundamental for a community seeking a firmer foundation and an opportunity to thrive. Tribal communities are no different, and this stability and opportunity is tied to Tribal sovereignty, Tribal self-determination, and the Federal Government's trust responsibilities. The creativity unleashed by the infusion of Tribal culture and traditions into practice and services is transforming the delivery of services within the Tiwahe communities, offering a model of practice for BIA to operationalize and for other federally recognized Tribes to adopt and implement.

Tribes support the Tiwahe approach because it allows Tribes to create their own potential, and provides freedom to design programs and integrate services with Tribal culture and tradition produces power outcomes beneficial to the Indian community and families living there. The Tiwahe Initiative fosters systematic change individual Tiwahe pilot sites, and serves as laboratory for new approaches within a national model for other Tribes and Tribal organizations.

The pilot sites report a significant decrease in attempted and completed suicides, a dramatic decrease in recidivism rates for juveniles, reunification between children and their parents significantly earlier (4 to 6 months) than previous rates due to key positions within their Tribal courts systems, decreases in overall removals of Indian children from the community, a revitalization of the language, and the ability to start addressing homelessness, overcrowding, and housing shortages in their community. Each pilot site had flexibility to use the funding to fill in the gaps and address the service needs left by other programs and funding sources, such as grants. For example, one pilot site chose to focus on enhancements to existing services to address suicide and substance abuse prevention in their youth and services to strengthen their mental health and address trauma. The pilot sites improved and increased screening, access to family and social services, alternatives to incarceration, access to prevention, intervention services, treatment opportunities, referral procedures, and case management services. A report on the performance of the Tiwahe initiative is accessible here: <https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/assets/bia/ois/dhs/1%20-%20IA%20Tiwahe%20Final%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf>.

FY 2022 Actions

The FY 2022 appropriation included an additional \$2.0 million in Social Services funding for Tiwahe to support the expansion of the program to two additional pilot sites. BIA will conduct

consultation on criteria used to select new pilot sites to ensure FY 2022 funding is allocated in a timely fashion.

FY 2023 President's Budget Proposal to Expand Programmatic Goals

The Department's FY 2023 budget submission includes investments for Indian Affairs to expand the Tiwahe Initiative to an additional 10 sites and includes a new focus on community safety and economic opportunity. The expansion to these two new programmatic areas will support a new phase of the Initiative, focusing on efforts to address Tribal needs and improve the overall harmony of Tribal communities. Funding will enable Indian Affairs to assess the viability and benefits of programs that impact family, community, and the environment, such as community policing, social work, and educational programs that focus on the spiritual and cultural aspects of Tribal members' well-being and address issues such as human trafficking, murdered and missing indigenous persons, and domestic violence.

The Tiwahe-related proposal provides an \$8.0 million increase for public safety and justice under Tribal Justice Support. Subject to the result of tribal consultation sessions on this funding increase, our plan is to target this funding to the existing and new Tiwahe sites to help establish or enhance their wellness courts or alternative courts to serve as alternatives to incarceration and provide a culturally appropriate forum to assist clients in addressing underlying behavioral health and substance abuse issues. The selection criteria for these new sites have not been determined and will be influenced by the tribal consultation referenced above. The final portion would be distributed among a broader group of tribes that are actively seeking financial support from the Office of Tribal Justice Support for various components of a new or existing wellness or alternative courts focusing on child dependency and family related matters. The prioritization criteria for funding among this group would be determined through the referenced tribal consultation sessions.

The Tiwahe expansion proposal also includes an additional \$5.0 million to provide funding for an Economic Development component to the Initiative, which will further the Tiwahe tested and proven philosophy of Tribal control and empowerment. The funding will provide resources locally to provide a basis for improving financial literacy and growing economies in a way uniquely suited to each site's social, geographic, and economic conditions. The Initiative will also provide support for reservation specific economic development feasibility studies, the development of Tribal government codes and capacity that promotes economic development (e.g., tourism codes, timber codes, zoning codes, building codes, financial education, etc.), and plans for business infrastructure development and investment capacity. Based on methodology derived from Tribal consultations, funding will be provided to current and newly established Tiwahe sites with a remaining balance of funding going to additional Tribes.

Subactivity / Program	Tiwahe Funding Levels				Notes
	2021 Tiwahe Enacted	2022 Tiwahe Enacted	2023 Tiwahe Request Program Change	2023 Tiwahe Request	
Element					
Social Services (TPA)	16,300,000	18,300,000	+20,200,000	36,500,000	Expand initiative to additional tribes, add FTEs for a National Program Office.
Indian Child Welfare Act (TPA)	8,400,000	8,400,000	+8,480,000	16,880,000	Provide ICWA funding to at least two Tiwahe sites & expand initiative.
Job Placement and Training (TPA)	1,550,000	1,550,000	-	1,550,000	
Housing Program (TPA)	1,700,000	1,700,000	+3,000,000	4,700,000	Funding will give Tiwahe Tribes the leverage to develop housing assistance, build energy-efficient homes and address housing conditions.
Law Enforcement Special Initiatives	3,033,000	3,033,000	-	3,033,000	
Tribal Justice Support	7,600,000	7,600,000	+8,000,000	15,600,000	Funds Healing to Wellness courts.
Economic Development (TPA)	-	-	+5,000,000	5,000,000	Support Tribes in developing and operating comprehensive, integrated economic and community development programs
Total	38,583,000	40,583,000	+44,680,000	83,263,000	