

# **IHS Summit Recommendations**

## **Summary of Issue:**

After requests from Tribes for several years, Tribal leaders and representatives, policy experts, and federal partners met to discuss the current Indian Health Service (IHS) budget formulation process, budget climate, and budget priorities in an effort to identify new ideas and recommendations to improve the Indian health system. During the Indian Health Service Budget Summit held on October 14, 2014, more than 100 attendees participated in a World Café Session to identify areas of need and to develop recommendations for legislative, administrative, and advocacy action. A summary of all the recommendations developed during the Summit are included below and supplemental information is available in the appendix.

## **Objectives/Goals:**

1. Promote recommendations from the Indian Health Service with the Administration and Congress.
2. Engage Tribal leadership and employees to improve information sharing, including local data and best practices, Congressional visits, and personal stories
3. Strengthen partnerships with educational institutions, research experts, Tribal and non-Tribal businesses, and foundations to support changes in policy and legislation that improve the Indian health system.

## **Strategy & Actions:**

### Legislative Recommendations

Many of the recommendations made during the IHS Budget Summit were priorities that Self-Governance Tribes already support. The top five recommendations include:

1. Advanced appropriations for IHS
2. Mandatory funding for IHS
3. Remove Contract Support Costs from base service funding
4. Create a 51<sup>st</sup> State for Medicaid for Indian Country
5. Directly fund block grants to Tribes.

### Administrative Recommendations

Administrative recommendations were drafted to provide the IHS Director items to streamline the budget formulations process, gather and share data, improve internal processes, and encourage Tribal and Federal collaboration. The top recommendations include:

1. Improve the IHS National Budget Formulation Process
  - Self-Governance Tribes should request annual budget analysis and data necessary to ensure rational decision-making during the budget formulation process.
  - Additional transparency is needed to improve decision-making, including access to pass-back information, identification of policies, procedures and issues that hinder IHS staff, and open forums with agency staff.

- Request additional agency staff and funding support for outside expertise to analyze data, write and publish information, and maximize capture of alternative resources.
2. Assign a high level I/T/U Task Force to provide recommendations to redesign the IHS.
    - Conduct an analysis of alternative business models, including funding designations, mission, formal partnership, and organizational structure.
    - Streamline and eliminate unnecessary, bureaucratic processes to improve health care delivery.
    - Maximize third party revenue or support access to other revenue sources.
    - Develop a workforce development plan.
  3. Develop an annual report that evaluates the federal government's obligation to Tribes
  4. Commission a Task Force to re-evaluate and update budget lines items and funding allocation and formulas to reflect business operations today.
  5. Request the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of the Interior each develop a health policy to include determinants of health and outcomes.

#### Advocacy Recommendations

1. Organize Tribal leaders and Congressional campaign.
  - Develop an organized Congressional campaign and messaging.
  - Hold a Hill Action Day.
  - Use Social media.
  - Leverage partnerships to increase participation and Congressional visits.
2. Educate Administration and Congress.
  - Set up meetings with key administration officials.
  - Invites Congressional members and staff to Indian Country.
  - Advocate for parity in funding for IHS.
3. Tell Indian Country's story better.
  - Develop an education and orientation program to educate Congress, public and new Tribal leaders on all aspects of Indian history, trust obligations, services, disparities, and legislation.
  - Provide personal stories and local data.
  - Prepare visuals.
4. Strengthen Partnerships.
  - Leverage relationship with institution in and out of Indian Country to support advocacy efforts.