



SOCIAL SECURITY

Fiscal Year 2023 Tribal Consultation and Call to Action Plan

The January 26, 2021, Presidential [Memorandum](#) on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships requested a detailed plan of action for executive departments and agencies to implement policies and directives of Executive Order (EO) 13175 of November 6, 2000, titled *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*. In response to the Memorandum, we created our [2022 Tribal Consultation and Call to Action Plan](#). The Biden Administration also issued EO 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, which includes Indigenous and Native American persons in its definition of “underserved communities.” In addition to the actions we describe in our plan, the [Equity Action Plan](#) also includes initiatives that will identify and address systemic barriers to full participation in our programs and services for Native Americans.

We are pleased to share the 2023 Tribal Consultation and Call to Action Plan executive summary to build on our accomplishments in 2022 and reaffirm our commitment to meaningful and robust engagement regarding policies that have Tribal implications.

Our plan provides action for the following initiatives:

- Improve Service Delivery and Equitable Access to our Programs
- Strengthen Tribal Consultation
- Increase Outreach and Educational Efforts to Tribal Communities
- Promote Hiring of Native Students and Retention of New Hires
- Conduct Data Collection and Analysis
- Provide Resources to the Office for Native American Partnerships

Improve Service Delivery and Equitable Access to our Programs

To improve service delivery, we will market how Tribal members can obtain services for SSA programs and provide alternative service channels. We will promote awareness of the needs of populations facing barriers, such as native languages barriers, by the following actions:

- Use technology, such as video service delivery and MS Teams video capability, to bridge distances to improve service delivery to Indian country for field office and hearing office services, including efforts for improved customer experience in Tribal communities.
- Navigate cultural stigmas and barriers by enhancing interpreter services to include additional Native languages.
- Implement national memorandums of understanding to address geographic barriers faced by those in isolated remote Tribal communities to offer services through video in collaboration with the local Tribal Health Services.



SOCIAL SECURITY

- Engage with Federal partners to discuss overlapping policy matters with impacts to benefits such as the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act.
- Seek opportunities to clarify for military service members who can receive expedited processing of claims through our Veterans Wounded Warriors Program.
- Expand our employees' knowledge of Tribal cultures, treaties, and laws, and foster their awareness, sensitivity, and effective communications.
- Expand the repository of case precedents, the Native American Precedent and Resource Center (NAPR), that provides knowledge of the complexity of Tribal income programs allowing for accurate documentation of income and resources potentially eligible for exclusions under SSI policy on a consistent, nationwide basis.
- Provide training on the NAPR, in addition to providing refresher training on the Assistance Based on Need program.

Strengthen Tribal Consultation

To ensure Tribes have full access to our programs and services, we will engage through meaningful consultation on policies that affect Tribal communities and follow the [Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation](#), issued November 30, 2022. Our national consultations will complement our ongoing engagement at the local level between SSA managers, public affairs specialists, and the Tribal communities within their service areas. To meet this goal, we will:

- Host national consultations with Tribal Government officials and offer national roundtable discussions to hear Tribal perspectives.
- Collaborate through the White House Council on Native American Affairs on inter-agency activities.
- Seek opportunities on national platforms at conferences to share benefit program guides and host roundtable discussions for national and regional experts to engage in policy feedback sessions.
- Support communication and issue resolution at the local level.
- Offer consultation or roundtable to Tribal Leaders on the Tribal Social Security Fairness Act of 2018, to extend Social Security coverage to Tribal council members and answer questions on the administrative procedures.

Increase Outreach and Educational Efforts to Tribal Communities

To improve access to and understanding of our programs, we will conduct seminars with Tribal entities to explain our programs. We will help Tribal community members create *my Social Security* accounts and provide the following:

- Create regional partnerships, inclusive of Urban Indian Centers, to preserve essential knowledge and resources vital for establishing Tribal relationships.



SOCIAL SECURITY

- Enhance understanding of benefits eligibility under our programs through varied methods of communication, such as, blogs, social media, radio, and newspapers.
- Publish a detailed benefits guide and create other educational resources for Tribal Benefit Coordinators on Social Security services, and market available resources on our public-facing website for Tribal affairs (www.ssa.gov/people/aian) to inform Tribal members how to apply for benefits and appeal unfavorable decisions.
- Increase Tribal representation on the panel for the SSA's National Disability Forum (<https://www.ssa.gov/ndf/index.htm>).
- Host an exhibit booth at national conferences hosted by Tribal Community groups and organizations.
- Seek opportunities to donate equipment through normal donation procedures.

Promote Hiring of Native Students and Retention of New Hires

We are committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse, qualified pool of applicants at all levels of the agency. To meet this goal, we plan to:

- Play a key role in broadening our recruitment and retention efforts among underrepresented groups by including our National Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council team of executives.
- Utilize Regional Advisory Councils designed to enhance diverse recruitment; collaborate with Human Resources to enhance SSA presence at targeted job fairs
- Seek Office of Personnel Management authority, through Human Resources, for internship opportunities and direct Native hiring.
- Market employment and other services through Tribal Colleges and Universities, including community colleges, by expanding our network. Assist Tribal applicants to navigate USAJOBS to locate and apply for jobs.
- Research access to the NativeHire.org national database and other employment resources to market hire Native students.

Conduct Data Collection and Analysis

To expand our knowledge of the Tribal Communities we serve, we will conduct ongoing data collection and analysis. The data collection shall be utilized in the following way:

- Improve outreach to Tribal communities based on data and trends in claims outcomes.
- Identify underserved Tribal communities and set up listening sessions with those communities so that SSA employees can learn ways to improve services in our local offices, as well as share published material and information on service delivery channels.



SOCIAL SECURITY

Provide Resources to the Office for Native American Partnerships

On September 27, 2022, we announced that we established an Office of Native American Partnerships reporting to the Commissioner. In FY 2023, we will develop strategic work plans for the office, including staffing, governance, standard operating procedures, and internal controls for the following functions:

- Elevate and centralize efforts to administer comprehensive programs and policies related to American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Enhance the agency's relationship with Tribes and serve as the primary point of contact on Tribal affairs for all stakeholders.
- Coordinate internal agency Native American efforts, including analysis of data to identify underserved Tribal communities and set up listening sessions to improve services in our field offices and hearing offices.
- Increase external program awareness to the Tribal community through serving as panelists on national conferences to provide SSA updates in Indian Country and attend local meetings with Tribal leaders and their delegates.
- Recruit a diverse candidate pool for hiring at all levels; and
- Serve as the primary point of contact for Tribal Government Offices to foster transparency and collaboration.

Managing the Plan

To monitor compliance with EO 13175 and President Biden's Memorandum dated January 26, 2021, the Commissioner established two new executive leads:

- Director for the Office of Native American Partnerships, Richard Litsey
- Deputy Director and American Indian Alaska Native Executive Lead, Renee Ferguson

Both executives will effectively manage the plan through coordinated discussions on policy compliance, serve as the initial contact for Tribes to request or inquire about Tribal consultations, improve access to benefits, and actively work to enhance ongoing relationships with Tribes.