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Fiscal Year 2024 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*. 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 response to Executive Orders and the Memorandum, we are pleased to share the 2024 Tribal Consultation and Call to Action Plan executive summary to build on our [accomplishments in 2023](#) and reaffirm our commitment to meaningful and robust engagement regarding policies that have Tribal implications.

Our plan provides actions to meet these six initiatives:

- **Provide Tribal Consultation with Tribal Leaders & Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs)**
- **Increase the Use of Technology to Connect SSA with Tribal Communities**
- **Provide SSA Program Training to Tribal Government Employees**
- **Promote Recognition of Native Language Revitalization Efforts at SSA**
- **Establish the Commissioner’s Tribal Advisory Committee (CTAC)**
- **Recruit Native Students and Invest in their Retention**

Provide Tribal Consultation with Tribal Leaders & UIOs

Our national consultations will complement ongoing engagements at the local level between SSA managers, public affairs specialists, and the Tribal communities within their service areas. To ensure Tribal Nations maintain 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. To meet this goal, we will take the following actions:

- Collaborate through the White House Council on Native American Affairs on inter-agency activities.
- Host national consultations with Tribal Government officials and host Tribal Listening Sessions with UIOs to hear Tribal perspectives led by ONAP.
- Offer consultation to Tribal Leaders potentially interested in extending Social Security coverage to Tribal council members and answer questions on the administrative procedures governing the Tribal Social Security Fairness Act of 2018.
- Seek opportunities on national platforms to share benefit program guides and host roundtable discussions for national and regional experts to engage in policy feedback sessions.



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- Engage with Federal partners and Tribal Leaders to discuss policy matters that impact benefits such as the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act.
- Seek Tribal Leader or designee for representation on the panel for the [SSA National Disability Forum](#), when relevant.

Increase the Use of Technology to Connect SSA with Tribal Communities

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, through the following actions:

- Use technology, such as video service delivery and MS Teams video capability, to bridge distances to improve service delivery to Tribal Communities for field office and hearing office services, including maintaining existing video partnerships and establishing new partnerships.
- Collaborate across agencies and internally to maintain 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, Tribal Nations and UIOs.
- 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 supplemental security income (SSI) policy.
- 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, offer training seminars, and applicable mobile services.
- Seek opportunities to donate equipment through normal donation procedures.
- Identify underserved Tribal communities using technology to set up listening sessions with communities to build on methods to improve services, and market information through service delivery channels.
- Improve outreach to Tribal communities based on data and trends in claims outcomes through the use of technology.
- Utilize technology to identify critical geographic areas in underserved communities in and near Tribal communities to target *Anti-Fraud and Scam Messaging* via news articles and public service announcements.

Provide SSA Program Training to Employees of Tribal Nations & UIOs

Due to significant turnover through the Pandemic due to Covid, we must offer *SSA 101 Basic Benefits Training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices or Urban Indian Organizations



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who provide social worker support roles for Tribal members applying for SSA programs and services. To support this effort, we will take the following actions:

- Provide presenter led training on the *Assistance Based on Need* Program and the *Native American Precedent Repository and Resource Center* as well as other relevant policies.
- Develop new training products to support new initiatives, such as Interagency Equity in Retirement, Veterans Scam and Fraud Evasion “VSaFE”, and Anti-Fraud Tiger Team.
- Create regional partnerships, inclusive of Urban Indian Centers, to preserve essential knowledge and resources vital for establishing Tribal relationships.
- Enhance understanding of benefits eligibility under our programs through varied methods of communication, such as, blogs, social media, radio, and newspapers.
- Publish a detailed *Tribal 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.
- Host exhibit booths at national conferences hosted by Tribal Organizations, in addition to providing presentations and question and answer sessions.
- Seek opportunities to clarify when military service members can receive expedited processing of claims through our *Veterans Wounded Warriors Program*.
- Expand training material to include *Anti-Fraud and Scam Messaging* for Tribal Communities.

Promote Recognition of Native Language Revitalization Efforts at SSA

The [Native American Languages Act, P.L. 101-477](#) (as amended) establishes the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages. In 2022, the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Interior, Agriculture, and others collectively as the “Lead Agencies” entered into a [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) on Native Languages. Signing the MOA as a “Supporting Agency,” means that we agree to support the purpose and goals provided in the MOA by recognizing and promoting the use of Native American languages, to the extent practicable. To support this goal, we plan to:

- Implement SSA’s first ever *Native Language Action Plan* in coordination with the White House Council on Native American Affairs through the following deliverables in FY 2024:
 - Include Native Languages in meetings, consultations, and listening sessions when practicable.
 - Seek hiring authorities and promote bilingual hiring authority for Native Languages.



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- Expand SSA employees' knowledge of Tribal cultures, treaties, and laws, and foster their awareness, sensitivity, and effective communications.
- Collaborate with agency components to support the Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) through the following actions:
 - Expand the Agency Language Access Plan to recognize Native Languages.
 - Enhance SSA TV informational notices in Field Office lobbies to include local Native Languages.
 - Produce materials in Native Languages for SSA Field Offices.
 - Ensure, consistent with SSA policy, interpreters are paid for services to conduct SSA appointments for Native Americans.
 - Work to reduce cultural stigmas and barriers by enhancing interpreter services to include additional Native languages.
 - Partner with the Tribal community and/or translation services contactors to assist with updates to materials and SSA Language page.

Establish the Commissioner's Tribal Advisory Committee (CTAC)

Our Tribal Consultations have included a significant amount of feedback regarding inclusiveness of Tribal perspectives in delivering services and development of new procedures or processes that impact Tribal communities. To meet this goal, we plan to:

- Initiate research efforts with guidance from other Federal Agency leaders and in collaboration with Tribal Leaders to establish SSA's first Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC).
- Design the structure of the CTAC in a manner that will ensure the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) Exemption applies.
- Develop language for a Charter and Rules of Order to provide clear guidance on how to maintain FACA Exemption once the TAC is implemented.
- Solicit for CTAC members and SSA representatives to support the Committee following the initial research efforts.

Recruit Native Students and Invest in their Retention

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:

- Broaden our recruitment strategies and retention efforts among under-represented groups with our National Diversity and Inclusion Council team of executives inclusive of improving workforce morale (IWM) activities.
- Utilize Advisory Councils designed to enhance diverse recruitment and collaborate with Human Resources to enhance SSA presence at Tribal job fairs.



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- 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](https://www.nativehire.org) national database, opportunities to use HandShake, and other employment resources to market hiring of Native students.

Managing the Plan

To monitor compliance with relevant laws, executive orders, and Presidential Memorandums, the Commissioner maintains three executive leads:

- Director for the Office of Native American Partnerships
- Deputy Director for the Office of Native American Partnerships
- Tribal Consultation Official for the Office of the Commissioner

The executives effectively manage the plan through coordinated discussions on policy compliance and benchmarking the action plan against other federal agencies who serve with us on the White House Council on Native American Affairs. Additionally, the executives serve as the initial contact for Tribes to request or inquire about Tribal consultations, improve access to benefits, and maintain relationships with Tribes. Our Tribal Action Plan is a strategy that supports our Agency Strategic Plan and links tactical agency plans to our efforts to address systemic barriers to full participation in our programs and services for American Indian and Alaskan Natives:

- People Facing Barriers Strategy
- Equity Action Plan
- Human Capital Operating Plan
- Language Access Plan
- Agency Strategic Operating Plan
- Video Enhancement Strategy
- Anti-Fraud and Scam Alert Strategy

In response to Executive Orders and the Memorandums, the executives develop the *2024 Tribal Consultation and Coordination Plan Progress Report* to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives and provide recommendations for 2025 planning. The progress report is due in October 2024 to the Domestic Policy Council and Director of Management and Budget.