

Urban Indian Organizations Encouraged to Apply to IHS Produce Prescription Pilot Program by June 8, 2023

Category: Policy Blog

written by Colin Tompson | May 25, 2023

On April 24, 2023, the Indian Health Services (IHS) [announced](#) the availability of \$2.5 million in funding to support the development of [produce prescription programs](#) for Native communities. The IHS produce prescription program is designed to assist American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) individuals and families who are experiencing food insecurity and/or diet-related health problems to more easily obtain fresh produce by receiving a prescription from a health care provider. Launching these programs in Native communities will support the efforts to reduce food insecurity, incorporate more traditional foods, and improve health outcomes among AI/AN people by increasing their access to healthy foods. [Urban Indian Organizations \(UIO\) are eligible to apply](#). **The application deadline is June 8, 2023**, and the earliest anticipated start date is June 23, 2023. IHS anticipates issuing approximately six to eight awards for up to \$500,000 for a performance period of five years.

Background

This pilot program is part of the IHS's efforts to implement the Biden Administration's [National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#) (the Strategy). The program provides an opportunity to engage with UIOs by addressing food insecurity and decreasing the risk of diet-related illness among AI/ANs. By incorporating traditional foods, it also provides an opportunity to deliver culturally appropriate nutrition education for the more than 70% of AI/ANs living off-reservations. AI/AN people experience the [highest rates of diabetes](#) across all racial and ethnic groups compared to non-Hispanic whites. Moreover, diabetes and heart disease are among the [top five leading causes](#) of death for AI/AN people who live in urban areas and urban AI/AN people are [more than three times more likely](#) to die from diabetes than their white peers and have higher death rates attributable to heart disease than urban white people. Additionally, according to a report published in the Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, "[u]rban AI/ANs were more likely to [experience food insecurity](#) than rural AI/ANs."

NCUIH's Role

NCUIH continuously advocates for health equity and advancement of urban AI/AN communities, including food security for AI/ANs living in urban areas. On July 15, 2022, NCUIH submitted comments to the Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and recommended that they support UIOs to promote food security, nutrition, and exercise; include urban AI/AN populations in future research efforts and government projects; and establish consistent Urban Confers regarding nutrition, hunger, and health. NCUIH also supports an [increase in funding for maintaining Special Diabetes Program for Indians \(SDPI\)](#) to enable the program to continued success in reducing diabetes and diabetes-related illnesses throughout Indian Country.

Further, in September 2022, Walter Murillo (Choctaw), CEO of NATIVE HEALTH and President-Elect of NCUIH, [headlined a panel](#) titled "Breaking Barriers: Bridging the Gap Between Nutrition and Health" at the [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#), where they unveiled

the Strategy. Mr. Murillo highlighted high rates of food insecurity in Indian Country, which intersects with other social determinants of health such as limited housing, employment, and lack of trust in health care systems in Native communities.

NCUIH will continue to advocate for the resources needed to reduce health disparities for AI/ANs, regardless of where they live.