

IHS Action Plan for Removal from the GAO High-Risk List

December 9, 2025

Indian Health Service



Action Plan Approach



- Focus on oversight of facilities and programs to address root causes:
 - Organizational structure
 - Accountability for competency
 - Compliance culture
 - Just Culture
 - Collaborative work and effective communication
- Address the root causes through the IHS Realignment – a proactive approach moving the agency forward.
- Based on federal standards to improve the agency environment and structure to focus on oversight, efficiency, effectiveness, reliability, accountability, and compliance.

Public-facing Action Plan

Recently released on the IHS website:

<https://www.ihs.gov/actionplanGAOHighRiskList/>

- Purpose: commitment to address the high-risk issue and sustain progress.
- Background: highlight major activities since 2017 to address the high-risk issue.
- Approach: tied to the agency's Strategic Plan and the Realignment activity.
- Ownership: IHS Executive Leadership Team.
- Reporting: quarterly updates about progress and outcomes.
- Areas of Emphasis: identified root causes.
- Activities: 6 activities based on federal standards to address the root causes.

Activities, Lead Executives, and Supporting Offices



Activity	Lead Executive	Supporting Office
Governance Structure	IHS Director	Office of the Director
Overall Responsibilities and Organizational Realignment	IHS Director / Deputy Director	Office of the Director, Intergovernmental and External Affairs, Healthcare Operations, and Enterprise Services.
Leadership Development	Deputy Director	Human Resources, Quality, Intergovernmental and External Affairs, Healthcare Operations, and Enterprise Services
Internal Agency Communication	IHS Director / Deputy Director	Office of the Director (Leadership Support Team), Intergovernmental and External Affairs, Healthcare Operations, and Enterprise Services.
Monitoring	IHS Director / Deputy Director	Office of the Director (Oversight and Performance)
Risk Management and the Senior Assessment Team	IHS Director / Deputy Director	Office of the Director (Oversight and Performance)

Action Plan Strategic Workgroup

- Core workgroup to oversee, develop, and design:
 - Planned next steps (with timelines)
 - Outcome metrics
 - Barriers and challenges
 - Required resources.
- The Workgroup is led by the DDQHERM, Senior Medical Advisor, and Evaluation and Efficiency Officer with other members from across the agency with subject matter expertise in:
 - Intergovernmental (Tribal) Affairs, Management Operations, Field Operations, Medical and Clinical Services, Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources, Physical Environment, Nursing, and leaders from Area and Service Unit levels.

Timeline to Complete the Action Plan

A fully developed and initiated Action Plan by March 2026.

- December 2025 – initial Workgroup meetings (virtual)
- Early January 2026 – sequestered Workgroup meeting (in-person)

Anticipate that the Action Plan may take up to 12-36 months to complete in parallel with the agency's realignment.

