DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Indian Health Service
Rockville MD 20857

October 14, 2026

Dear Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee Members:

As I prepare for the November Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee (TSGAC) meeting, I would like your input on how the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribes can strengthen Tribal Self-Governance while also supporting compliance, accountability, and program integrity.

Self-Governance depends on a strong Government-to-Government relationship and the ability of Tribes to manage health programs in accordance with federal law and their priorities. At the same time, the IHS and Tribes are required under the law to ensure federal resources are appropriately managed and that health services remain available to the people we serve.

Recent experience, as well as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) work involving IHS programs, highlights the requirements for strong internal controls, timely identification of potential compliance issues, technical assistance, and monitoring. The HHS OIG has also recognized the unique legal and operational context of Tribal programs operating pursuant to an Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) agreement with the IHS, and the importance of approaches tailored to Tribal governments and organizations.

I would appreciate TSGAC's perspective on the following questions:

1. What early warning signs should prompt the IHS and a Tribe to engage before a financial, compliance, or program-integrity issue becomes formally identified, and how should that engagement occur?
2. What type of technical assistance from the IHS would be most useful to Tribes in strengthening internal controls, financial management, audit readiness, and corrective-action processes without unnecessarily intruding on Tribal sovereignty?
3. Would nationwide training on internal controls, financial management, audits, and corrective-action processes be useful, and if so, what specifically?
4. What types of issues are causing Tribes to have delayed or delinquent audits, and how could the IHS assist or support Tribes with this?
5. What types of issues are Tribes having with implementing timely corrective actions once issues have been identified, and how could the IHS assist or support Tribes with this?

These questions are intended to guide our meeting and discussion. This meeting will be a starting point, and we can identify concerns earlier, provide assistance where it is useful, and ensure that any monitoring or other response is timely, appropriately tailored, and respectful of Tribal Self-Governance.

I look forward to discussing these issues with you at the November meeting and hearing your recommendations for how the IHS can strengthen its policies, processes, and support to Tribes.

Sincerely,

Mark Cruz
Director