



Indian Health Service

# 2023-2027 Office of Urban Indian Health Programs Strategic Plan

January 2023

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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Acronym	Abbreviation
AI/AN	American Indian/Alaska Native
CCUIH	California Consortium for Urban Indian Health
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
FMAP	Federal Medical Assistance Percentage
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Centers
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
HIT	Health Information Technology
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration
IDCS	Integrated Data Collection System
IHCIA	Indian Health Care Improvement Act
IHS	Indian Health Service
NCUIH	National Council of Urban Indian Health
OUIHP	Office of Urban Indian Health Programs
TA	Technical Assistance
UDS	Uniform Data System
UIOs	Urban Indian Organizations
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs

## Introduction

The Indian Health Service (IHS) is the Federal agency with primary responsibility for the health care and health advocacy of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people. The mission of the IHS is to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of AI/AN people to the highest level. The provision of health services to AI/AN people is based on a long history of government-to-government relationships between Tribes and the Federal government and is recognized in the U.S. Constitution, numerous treaties, statutes, Federal case law, regulations, and executive orders. The IHS provides a comprehensive health service delivery system that includes the provision of health services through the direct services, contracts and compacts with Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations via the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, and contract and grant funding to Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) via the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA).<sup>1</sup>

The IHS provides oversight of grants and contracts to UIOs with the purpose of making health services more accessible to Urban Indians. The IHCIA directed the establishment of an office within IHS to provide central oversight of the programs and services authorized by the IHCIA and to carry out the IHCIA provisions relating to Urban Indian health. The IHS established the Office of Urban Indian Health Programs (OUIHP) at IHS Headquarters to carry out these duties. The OUIHP, working with IHS Area Offices and IHS Headquarters program offices, oversees the program under which IHS currently awards contracts and grants to 41 UIOs that provide health care services to Urban Indians.

The OUIHP programmatic decision-making is guided and organized through the development of strategic plans. Each programmatic strategic plan aims to support the overall IHS mission and OUIHP goals to support stakeholder needs. The 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan was drafted by OUIHP with the assistance of an external evaluator and in close collaboration with key stakeholders through Urban Confer and Tribal Consultation. This document summarizes the planning activities and provides a framework for moving forward to achieve the IHS's mission for the next five years by focusing upon five major strategic pillars. A detailed implementation plan will be developed within the OUIHP for each major strategic pillar.

## Background

There are currently 41 non-profit UIOs nationwide funded through grants and contracts from the IHS. IHS funded UIOs are automatically eligible for Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) designation. Thus, in addition to IHS funding, approximately 45% of the UIOs receive Medicaid reimbursement as FQHCs and others receive fees for service under Medicaid for allowable services (i.e., behavioral health services, patient transportation, etc.).

The range of IHS/Urban grant and contract programs provided in facilities owned or leased by UIOs include:

- Health information resources
- Outreach and referral
- Dental services
- Traditional healing and medicine
- Comprehensive primary care services
- Limited primary care services
- Community health
- Substance use (outpatient and inpatient services)
- Behavioral health services
- Immunizations

<sup>1</sup> Title V of Pub. L. No. 94-437, 90 Stat 1400 (1976), (codified as amended at 25 U.S.C. §§ 1651-1660i).

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- Health promotion and disease prevention
- HIV activities and other health programs funded through state, Federal, and local resources

The previous OUIHP Strategic Plan covered a 5-year time-span from 2017 to 2021.<sup>2</sup> The OUIHP used a strategic plan to organize and focus resources in support of IHS and Urban Indian Organization initiatives and needs. For the 2017-2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan, extensive stakeholder engagement, including interviews with nearly all UIOs funded under the IHS, provided input on the plan’s goals and strategies. Since the implementation of the 2017-2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan, it is necessary to evaluate it in a way that highlights the achievements marked in the plan, the effect it had on involved organizations, and to re-direct activities and resources, if necessary.

**2017 – 2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan Evaluation**

This section summarizes the findings from the 2017-2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan evaluation. Between January and February 2022, an evaluation was conducted to determine the extent OUIHP implemented and completed the 2017-2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan priorities according to the set timeline. The evaluation included a review of organizational documents related to strategic plan implementation, feedback from focus groups with UIOs and IHS staff, and a review of strategic plan goal and objective implementation.

The 2017-2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan had two overarching goals:

1. To support currently IHS-funded UIOs in their efforts to address the key challenges they identified for improving and expanding their capacity to provide access to quality, culturally competent health services.
2. Increase OUIHP’s administrative capacity.

For each goal, there were identified accomplishments. Accomplishments are activities or events that occurred within the 2017-2021 OUIHP Strategic Plan timeframe and had evidence of meeting a set of short-term and long-term outcomes. Short-term and long-term outcomes and corresponding indicators were determined with OUIHP and stakeholders during focus groups to assess accuracy and reliability to set progress benchmarking. Table 1 represents some of the accomplishments from the evaluation.

**Table 1. 2017-2021 Strategic Plan accomplishments by goal from the evaluation**

Goal 1: To support currently IHS-funded UIOs in their efforts to address the key challenges they identified for improving and expanding their capacity to provide access to quality, culturally competent health services.	Goal 2: Increase OUIHP’s administrative capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided technical assistance on key legislation supporting UIOs in their efforts for 100% Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for two years, reimbursement from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Federal Tort Claims Act coverage, and removal of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transferred five former-National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism UIOs to OUIHP</li> <li>• Revised UIOs annual on-site review manual</li> <li>• Standardized UIOs’ contract language and developed templates</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Indian Health Service, “Office of Urban Indian Health Programs Strategic Plan: 2017-2021,” [https://www.ihs.gov/sites/urban/themes/responsive2017/display\\_objects/documents/IndianHealthServiceOfficeofUrbanIndianHealthProgramsStrategicPlan.pdf](https://www.ihs.gov/sites/urban/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/IndianHealthServiceOfficeofUrbanIndianHealthProgramsStrategicPlan.pdf), Accessed 28 Dec. 2022.

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Goal 1: To support currently IHS-funded UIOs in their efforts to address the key challenges they identified for improving and expanding their capacity to provide access to quality, culturally competent health services.	Goal 2: Increase OUIHP’s administrative capacity
<p>accreditation requirements for UIOs’ facilities-related activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided orientation, technical assistance, and training to Federal partners to strengthen and implement Urban Indian health priorities</li> <li>• Provided trainings via webinars/meetings</li> <li>• Provided technical assistance to UIOs, e.g., weekly office hours for information technology and electronic health record support</li> <li>• Provided access to accreditation training and technical assistance</li> <li>• Provided access to grant writing training and funding announcements</li> <li>• Distributed Urban Indian health budget line-item increases to address UIOs’ needs provided by Congress</li> <li>• Distributed funding to address the ongoing Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic provided by Congress</li> <li>• Initiated Urban Confer with Federal partners to seek input from UIOs</li> <li>• Collaborated with the IHS Office of Human Resources on recruitment activities for UIOs, including the IHS job board, and Loan Repayment and Scholarship programs</li> <li>• Collaborated with other Federal agencies to work toward achieving objectives, including the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) on the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment and Scholarship programs</li> <li>• Created a UIOs’ facilities map on the IHS website to improve access to care</li> <li>• Provided budget formulation data, including the number of Tribes served to communicate the role of UIOs in serving Tribal communities</li> <li>• Leveraged two IHS cooperative agreements to address community health needs assessments, communities of learning, training, technical assistance, and peer to peer support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated Uniform Data System (UDS) dashboard to capture verified data from 41 IHS-funded UIOs and added telehealth visits</li> <li>• Revised budget formulation dashboard to capture verified data from 41 IHS-funded UIOs</li> <li>• Provided workload summary reports to UIOs</li> <li>• Provided data on COVID-19 testing and vaccine administration to UIOs</li> <li>• Implemented first-ever national 4-in-grant program evaluation</li> <li>• Established standard methodology to distribute Urban Indian health funding increases</li> <li>• Improved the transparency of the Urban Indian health budget by providing an annual budget report</li> <li>• Filled key leadership positions in OUIHP Director and Deputy Director and filled six vacancies, including two Pathways interns</li> <li>• Leveraged Virtual Student Federal Service program to provide opportunities to five virtual interns</li> <li>• Leveraged cooperative agreement to address public policy; research and data; training and technical assistance; education, public relations, and marketing, as well as COVID-19 public health support</li> <li>• Collaborated and developed working relationships with other Federal agencies to work toward achieving strategic objectives, including the HRSA, Centers for Medicare &amp; Medicaid Services (CMS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Census Bureau, and the VA</li> </ul>

The OUIHP made progress and continues to make progress meeting the IHS mission to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of AI/AN people to the highest level. Substantial progress was made on objectives as evidenced by the document review and the OUIHP's progress reports. Overall, improvement is needed in the quality of measures and targets. Moving forward, it will be important for

the OUIHP to establish regular communication with UIOs to report progress on the objectives within the strategic plan.

Four recommendations emerged from IHS and UIOs to improve future strategic planning. These include:

- Develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-sensitive goals, objectives, and measures,
- Create a theory of change that will guide the plan,
- Create a communication plan for stakeholders to convey strategic plan status, and
- Develop a dashboard to show strategic plan implementation progress.

Integrating these recommendations will ensure OUIHP and UIOs are clear about related responsibilities to meet planning goals and objectives.

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

In February 2022, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted with the California Consortium for Urban Indian Health (CCUIH)<sup>3</sup> and National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH).<sup>4</sup> The framing of the SWOT analysis considered the impact the OUIHP will have on Urban Indian health over the next five years, how the work of these organizations intersects with the OUIHP and how the OUIHP can support UIOs' priorities. The results of these sessions are summarized in Table 2.

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<sup>3</sup> CCUIH is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) statewide alliance of 10 Urban Indian Organizations. <https://ccuih.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> The NCUIH is the national non-profit organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally-competent health and public health services for AI/AN people living in urban settings. <https://ncuih.org/>.

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**Table 2. SWOT analysis results from sessions with CCUIH and NCUIH**

OUIHP SWOT Analysis	
<p><b>OUIHP Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the AI/AN community and are culturally sensitive</li> <li>• Accessible and responsive to UIOs</li> <li>• Provides technical assistance and resources</li> <li>• Initiates Urban Confer</li> <li>• Knowledgeable leadership and staff</li> <li>• Provides good, consistent communication with UIOs</li> </ul>	<p><b>OUIHP Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Indian health lacks parity with other priority areas in the Indian health system</li> <li>• UIOs’ data are not accurately reflected</li> <li>• Productivity is highly dependent on individual leadership</li> <li>• Limited support for UIOs transitioning from an outreach and referral to ambulatory clinic</li> <li>• Limited funding opportunities for UIOs</li> </ul>
<p><b>OUIHP Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redefine the IHS, Tribal, and UIOs’ health system</li> <li>• Champion innovative ideas through collaborations with other Federal agencies</li> <li>• Growing focus on Urban Indian issues in Congress and the Administration</li> <li>• Improve the UDS reporting system</li> </ul>	<p><b>OUIHP Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited view of the Urban Indian health delivery system</li> <li>• IHS/Federal changes in leadership</li> <li>• Challenges in data collection causes misunderstanding of Urban Indian issues</li> <li>• Health Information Technology (HIT) modernization delays</li> <li>• Federal budget shortfalls</li> <li>• Additional variants of COVID-19</li> </ul>

Overall, the SWOT analysis indicated UIOs feel supported by the OUIHP; however, there are barriers that greatly impact the operations of UIOs. Fortunately, UIOs recognize opportunities to leverage advocacy efforts to support UIOs’ needs, including growing congressional support for Urban Indian issues. These results were helpful in identifying and planning priorities for the next 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan.



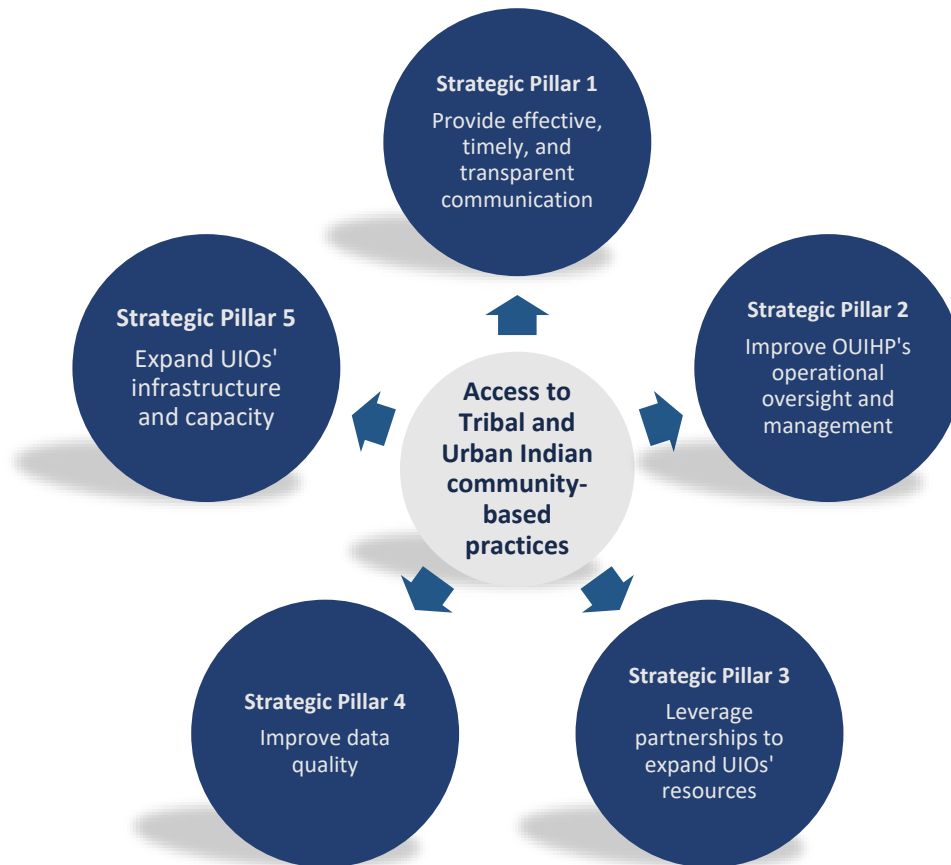
## 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan

The 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan will focus on growing and expanding OUIHP’s support of UIOs to meet their communities’ unique needs. To support UIOs, the OUIHP developed this section to guide programmatic action and decision-making, including strategic pillars, goals and objectives, and action steps.

The OUIHP recognizes the priorities of UIOs and the communities they serve. The OUIHP will achieve the IHS mission through communication and actions to promote health, wellness, and expand access to modern health care services, and collaborative partnerships. To help meet the IHS mission and support UIOs’ priorities, five strategic pillars were identified as foundational directions for the strategic plan. The strategic pillars are presented in Figure 1.

The OUIHP is committed to directing development and resources toward communication, operational oversight and management, partnership expansion, data quality, and UIOs’ infrastructure and capacity. Specifically, the OUIHP supports UIOs’ expansion and maximizing their resources by strengthening internal processes and tools, and leveraging partnership support and funding.

**Figure 1. 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan Pillars**



## Strategic Pillar Goals & Objectives

To achieve the IHS mission, the OUIHP identified goals and objectives under each strategic pillar (See Table 3 through Table 7 below).

### Strategic Pillar 1: Provide effective, timely, and transparent communication

The focus of strategic pillar one is to provide effective, timely, and transparent communication. The OUIHP acknowledges stakeholder engagement and building trust as priorities through internal and external communications.

**Table 3. Strategic pillar 1 goals and objectives**

Goals	Objectives
1. Ensure UIOs receive timely and accurate information	1. Deliver effective communication to UIO stakeholders (time-sensitive emails and meetings, bundle communication, i.e., newsletter, etc.).
2. Ensure a relationship of trust and transparency between IHS and UIOs	1. Develop plan to improve communication with internal and external stakeholders.
3. Secure meaningful feedback from stakeholders to inform IHS and Federal partners' decision-making	1. Effectively implement the revised Urban Confer policy across the IHS system. 2. Provide technical assistance to other Federal agencies to better engage UIOs in a process similar to Urban Confer. 3. Facilitate communications with Federal partners and UIOs on Urban Indian issues.

### Strategic Pillar 2: Improve the OUIHP operations oversight and management

The focus of strategic pillar two is to improve the OUIHP's operational oversight and management. The OUIHP recognizes efficiency can be maximized when internal processes and tools support programmatic needs, including continuous learning on the part of staff and access to appropriate resources.

**Table 4. Strategic pillar 2 goals and objectives**

Goals	Objectives
1. Strengthen UIO annual on-site review manual and process	1. Implement the electronic on-site review manual and process to improve consistency and usefulness. 2. Establish the annual on-site review process across IHS Areas through training and development.
2. Continue to standardize the contract templates	1. Provide training on using the revised contract templates.
3. Strengthen OUIHP 4-in-1 grant program oversight and management	1. Conduct 4-in-1 grant program reporting reviews and evaluation for quality improvement opportunities and to ensure quality assurance requirements are met.

Goals	Objectives
4. Enable OUIHP organizational change at the program level to ensure opportunities for development	1. Develop a performance focused OUIHP team.

**Strategic Pillar 3: Leverage partnerships to expand UIO resources**

The focus of strategic pillar three is to leverage partnerships to expand UIOs’ resources. The OUIHP provides education and technical assistance to other Federal agencies to support UIOs in exploring other funding opportunities.

**Table 5. Strategic pillar 3 goals and objectives**

Goals	Objectives
1. Support diversifying health funding and financing opportunities for UIOs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide information to UIOs on the VA reimbursement agreement program to increase participation.</li> <li>2. Provide technical assistance, as appropriate, in collaboration with the CMS, UIOs, and other partners on 100% FMAP.</li> <li>3. Collaborate and support meetings with Federal partners and UIOs.</li> <li>4. Collaborate with UIOs on whether and how an UIO-Specific All-Inclusive Rate is developed.</li> <li>5. Support UIOs efforts to improve patient revenue, i.e., third party resources.</li> <li>6. Provide technical assistance to UIOs transitioning from an outreach and referral program to an ambulatory clinic.</li> <li>7. Support inclusion in IHS budget formulation process.</li> </ol>
2. Ensure UIOs’ needs are reflected in Federal health policy for providers and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide information to UIOs about access to Federal resources and supplies.</li> <li>2. Support inclusion of UIOs as part of emergency response strategies.</li> </ol>
3. Recruit, develop, and retain quality staff across system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborate with UIOs to identify priority and emerging workforce issues and shortages.</li> <li>2. Collaborate with HRSA on the Auto-Health Professional Shortage Area scores to support recruitment of providers.</li> <li>3. Work collaboratively with other IHS offices and Federal agencies in recruitment efforts (loan repayment, scholarships, and National Health Service Corp).</li> <li>4. Collaborate with UIOs in addressing workforce shortages and issues.</li> </ol>

### Strategic Pillar 4: Improve data quality

The focus of strategic pillar four is to improve data quality. The OUIHP supports access to HIT and training for UIOs on the necessary tools.

**Table 6. Strategic pillar 4 goals and objectives**

Goals	Objectives
<b>1. Integrate electronic technology platforms and standard protocols to enhance data collection</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish accurate, verifiable, and user-friendly data.</li> <li>2. Support leveraging Federal and private partnerships, and intermediaries to support and enhance data quality.</li> <li>3. To improve data transparency and quality that extends reporting functionality to UIOs.</li> <li>4. Improve data that supports urban reference data.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Partner with UIOs and other urban stakeholders to improve data accuracy and quality</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partner with NCUIH data workgroup and Tribal Epidemiology Centers to improve UIO data reporting.</li> <li>2. Work with UIOs to achieve 100% data mapping to the National Data Warehouse.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Train UIOs on data collection</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide technical assistance and training webinars on a broad range of data collection-related topics.</li> <li>2. Develop resource repository (trainings, templates, etc.) to support accessibility of archived data education materials.</li> </ol>

### Strategic Pillar 5: Expand Urban Indian Organization Infrastructure and capacity

The focus of strategic pillar five is to expand Urban Indian Organization infrastructure and capacity through understanding the diverse systems and individual needs of UIOs. The OUIHP understands the importance of infrastructure and technology needs of UIOs.

**Table 7. Strategic pillar 5 goals and objectives**

Goals	Objectives
<b>1. Support UIOs in identifying and addressing UIOs infrastructure needs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review UIOs' infrastructure assessment reports based on the UIO Infrastructure Study.</li> <li>2. Partner with UIOs to develop strategies to support future UIO infrastructure development.</li> <li>3. Provide support to UIOs on the amended IHCIA provision authorizing IHS to make funds available for renovations, construction, and/or expansion of UIO facilities.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Modernize information technology to address UIOs' needs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue Urban Confer with UIOs in development and implementation of HIT modernization.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Expand UIOs' capacity and reach to meet service population needs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support the existing UIO capacities and the potential expansion of UIOs in unserved urban areas.</li> </ol>

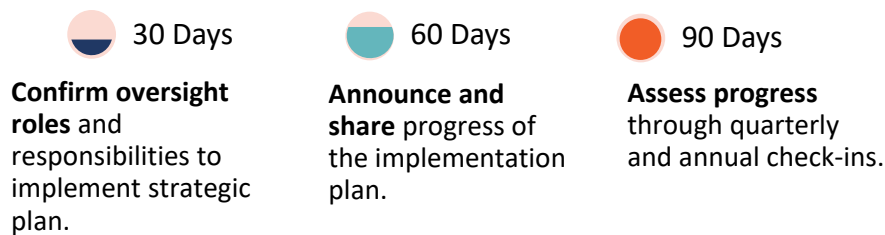
Goals	Objectives
	2. Support the expansion of new UIOs in unserved urban centers

## Implementation Plan

An implementation plan was developed to support the steps needed for OUIHP to put the outlined goals and objectives into action. The implementation plan identifies a specific task for each goal and objective, assignments to carry out the work, and a completion timeframe. To track progress, the implementation plan has been developed in a separate workbook document.

### Next Steps: 90-Day Launch Plan and Next Steps

The establishment of internal protocols for monitoring the implementation of the 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan in the first few months is a critical time. The first step is to determine implementation oversight responsibilities, which includes promoting the plan and/or identifying champions to promote the plan. In the first 90-days, specific steps provide orientation to the 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan. It also provides a calendar for establishing regular check-ins and reporting of progress. Figure 2 summarizes the 90-day launch plan for the 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan.



**Figure 2. OUIHP 90-day launch plan**

The OUIHP will orient IHS offices and programs about the 2023-20237 OUIHP Strategic Plan to ensure assigned responsibilities are carried out. Quarterly progress reviews are crucial to avoid implementation stagnation by monitoring activities. Annually, it will be important for the OUIHP to convene and review the plan and adjust the plan as needed. Table 8 lists the activities that would occur during the quarterly and annual reviews.

**Table 8. Progress check-in activities - quarterly and annually**

Quarterly Progress Review Activities	Annual Progress Review Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm and identify which action steps are active, complete, awaiting resources, or stalled.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and assess the plan.</li> </ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verify those responsible for an action step are fulfilling the requirements and meeting completion timeframes.</li><li>• Ensure responsible staff for an action step have the necessary resources or work plan to complete the task.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a briefing report that outlines the plan’s achievements, areas for improvement, and proposed updates.</li><li>• Revise the plan based on progress reports from action step leads to reflect changes in resources or needs.</li></ul> |
|--|--|

## Conclusion

The OUIHP is committed to the successful implementation of the 2023-2027 OUIHP Strategic Plan. The OUIHP will work in close coordination with the other IHS offices and programs and UIOs to implement the plan’s goals and objectives. These efforts are intended to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of AI/AN people to the highest level.