



OCT 29 2018

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to update you on recent developments related to Agency and Departmental initiatives to modernize health information technology (Health IT) infrastructure, applications, and capabilities in use throughout the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribes, and Urban Indian Organizations (I/T/U).

By letters dated June 26, 2017, and July 27, 2017, I initiated Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer to seek your input and recommendations on this subject through four listening sessions hosted by the IHS Office of Information Technology (OIT). On December 20, 2017, the IHS released a Health IT Modernization Request for Information seeking responses from vendors interested in describing industry innovations and capabilities that might best address I/T/U enterprise health care delivery and modernization needs.

On September 12, 2018, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), in close collaboration with IHS leadership, funded and signed a contract with Emerging Sun, LLC and subcontractors Pistis, LLC and Regenstrief Institute, to conduct an IHS Health IT Modernization Research Project (Health IT Research Project). This milestone would not have been possible without Departmental support. Involvement by the OCTO in the Immediate Office of the Secretary at HHS demonstrates the high visibility and importance of this collaboration. We deeply appreciate this support.

IHS leadership and the OIT are dedicated to ensuring that Health IT Research Project contractors follow an inclusive and collaborative process that emphasizes engagement with I/T/U stakeholders at each step. We are further committed to seeking your input as we make decisions implementing the Health IT modernization strategy. We will continue to keep Consultation and Confer open on this topic to receive input throughout the various stages of the Health IT Research Project.

The Health IT Research Project will be conducted over the next year, with specified deliverables to inform Agency planning and decision making, which may include both development projects and acquisitions. The components of the Health IT Research Project are listed below:

- I. Project Planning and Strategy. The first deliverable will be a plan for management and governance of the Health IT Research Project, which will include identifying stakeholders and advisors from the I/T/U.
- II. Convene an Expert Advisory Panel on IHS Health IT. This panel will include both experts from the information technology industry and individuals with expert knowledge and experience in IHS-specific health care and health information technology throughout Indian Country.

- III. I/T/U Facility Health IT Assessment. A large part of the Health IT Research Project will be an evaluation of the current state of Health IT across the I/T/U, with a focus on identifying clinical, process, and technical gaps to improve health care outcomes. Health IT Research Project contractors will work with I/T/U leaders to gather insights and recommendations about the current and desired future role performed by Health IT in improving clinical care and quality. This will be done through meetings, site visits, and data calls.
- IV. Health IT Analysis and Recommendations. The Health IT Research Project contractor will lead an analysis of alternatives for IHS Health IT solution modernization, which will include, but not be limited to, assessing third-party commercial products, evaluating the evolution of existing capabilities to a next generation technology architecture, and/or alternatives.
- V. Health IT Initiatives Roadmap and Strategy. The Health IT Research Project contractor will use the various findings to propose a prioritized roadmap that will inform execution of the Health IT modernization initiative. The IHS will consider these recommendations as we engage in Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer to finalize our Health IT Modernization strategy.
- VI. Health IT Community of Practice. Throughout the engagement, Health IT Research Project contractors will work with the I/T/U, OIT, and IHS Headquarters programs to create the framework for an American Indian/Alaska Native Health IT community of practice. Establishing a community of practice model will greatly facilitate implementation and success of new Health IT solutions as they are adopted.

The completion of the Health IT Research Project will provide valuable insights. The project also represents a tremendous opportunity for participation by Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations. Thank you in advance for your support and I look forward to updating you on our progress.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mitchell Thornbrugh, Acting Chief Information Officer and Director, OIT, IHS, by telephone at (301) 443-2019 or by e-mail at mitchell.thornbrugh@ihs.gov.

Sincerely,

/Michael D. Weahkee/

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