

RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

POSITION STATEMENT

The 21 Member Tribes of the ITAA strongly request appropriations for the HHS-ACF-OCS Community Services Block Grant-Rural Community Development (RCD) program be maintained at or above \$11.0 million.

KEY POINTS



The health and economic **well-being of low-income rural tribal communities** throughout the nation are dependent on the services funded by the RCD program.



Since 1983, critical **technical support, training and professional certification services** provided by ITCA have been created and continuously sustained through funding partnerships with the U.S. DHHS under the RCD Program.



Federal budget proposals target the RCD program. No other funding program of any federal agency is known to provide sustained multi-year funding for such tribal-specific, tribally-led services.

BACKGROUND

State certification programs do not handle the unique jurisdictional and legal framework that applies to tribal water systems. The tribally-led ITCA Program is U.S. EPA approved and its services are available to nearly all tribal communities nationwide. The ITCA Program ensures that its services meet the specific technical, cultural and socio-economic needs of operators in Indian Country. The RCD funding program directly addresses some of the federal government's trust responsibilities to the sovereign tribal nations. Continuation of the RCD program is vital to public health on tribal lands and surrounding communities.

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Position Statement:

The 21 Member Tribes of the ITAA strongly request appropriations for the HHS-ACF-OCS Community Services Block Grant-Rural Community Development (RCD) program be maintained at or above \$11.0 million.

Key Points

- The human health and economic well-being of low-income rural tribal communities throughout the nation are directly dependent on the services that are funded by the RCD program.
- Since 1983, critical technical support, training and professional certification services provided by ITCA have been created and continuously sustained through funding partnerships with the U.S. DHHS under the RCD Program.
- Federal budget austerity proposals often target the RCD program, falsely claiming it is duplicative to other federal programs, such as with the EPA and USDA. No other funding program of any federal agency is known to provide sustained multi-year funding for such tribal-specific, tribally-led services. The RCD funding program directly addresses some of the federal government's trust responsibilities to the sovereign tribal nations. Continuation of the RCD program is vital to public health on tribal lands and surrounding communities.

Background

State certification programs do not handle the unique jurisdictional and legal framework that applies to tribal water systems. Forcing tribal operators to use state certification programs creates a significant barrier to tribes being able to realize self-determination and ensure sustainable, safe water supplies and adequate sanitation for their communities.

The ITCA Program is formally approved by the U.S. EPA and its services are available to nearly all tribal communities nationwide. The tribally-led (by tribes and for tribes) nature of the ITCA Program ensures that its services meet the specific technical, cultural and socio-economic needs of operators in Indian Country.

States enjoy the ability to use 10% of their federally appropriated safe drinking water capital improvement State Revolving Funds (SRFs) for direct support of their state operator training and certification programs. In stark contrast, tribes are indirectly federally-allocated annual infrastructure construction funding through Tribal Set-Aside Programs, which expressly exclude funding for operator training or certification programs.