

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

POSITION STATEMENT

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

KEY POINTS

-  The human health and economic well-being of low-income rural communities of American Indian reservations throughout the nation are **directly dependent** on the services funded by the RCD program.
-  Since 1983, **critical technical support, training, and professional certification services** provided by the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA) have been created and continuously sustained through funding partnerships with HHS under the RCD Program.
-  **Federal budget proposals often target the RCD program.** No other funding program of any federal agency is known to provide sustained multi-year funding for such critical workforce capacity development services on American Indian reservations.



BACKGROUND

State water operator certification programs do not handle the unique jurisdictional and legal framework that applies to water systems located on American Indian reservations. Forcing personnel of Tribes to use state certification programs creates a significant barrier to local self-governance, as well as barriers to ensuring sustainable, safe water and adequate sanitation services for their communities.

The ITCA Program is formally approved by the 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 workforce development and professional credentialing services meet the specific technical, socio-economic, and local jurisdictional needs of water operators working on American Indian reservations.

States enjoy the ability to use 10% of their federally appropriated safe drinking water capital improvement State Revolving Funds 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.

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Key Points

- The human health and economic well-being of low-income rural communities of American Indian reservations throughout the nation are directly 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 HHS under the RCD Program.
- Federal budget proposals often target the RCD program, falsely claiming it is duplicative to other federal programs, such as with the EPA, USDA, and IHS. No other funding program of any federal agency is known to provide sustained multi-year funding for such critical workforce capacity development services on American Indian reservations. The RCD funding program directly addresses some of the federal government's trust responsibilities to sovereign Tribal nations. Continuation of the RCD program is vital to public health on Tribal lands and surrounding communities.

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