

American
Indian
Health
Area
Health
Education
Center

Three year
STRATEGIC
PLAN

Arizona
2023



Table of Contents

AIH-AHEC Background.....	1
Strategic Plan Development.....	2
Organizational Infrastructure.....	5
Clinical & Educational Partnerships.....	7
Youth Pathway Programs.....	8
Current Workforce Professional Development.....	10
Resource Development & Community Outreach.....	11
Conclusion.....	13

AIH-AHEC Background

The inception of the American Indian Health Area Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC) marks a pivotal moment in addressing healthcare disparities within Arizona's American Indian communities. A collaborative effort between the University of Arizona Area Health Education Center Program and the Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Health Care, this newly established center is dedicated to addressing the pressing healthcare needs of tribal communities across the state.

The AIH-AHEC Regional Center is the latest addition to Arizona's roster of AHEC Regional Centers, making it the sixth in the state. However, what truly makes it stand out is its unwavering commitment to bridging the healthcare gap for Native Americans. This dedication sets it apart as a unique and groundbreaking institution – the first of its kind in Arizona and one of the few across the nation – with a sole focus on strengthening the American Indian healthcare system and its workforce.

Collaborating with key partners like the San Carlos Apache Healthcare Corporation and Gila River Health Care, the AIH-AHEC Regional Center is poised to execute educational and training initiatives that will have a transformative impact on healthcare workforce development within tribal communities. Additionally, the AIH-AHEC is seeking to foster key partnerships with organizations and groups that will help support and promote AHEC services.

Built on the overarching mission of the AzAHEC Program, which aims to improve access to quality healthcare by enhancing the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals in underserved areas, the AIH-AHEC Regional Center focuses on practical solutions. Through community-based health professions rotations, ongoing professional education assistance, supporting existing healthcare staff to further their careers, and fostering the interest of K-12 students in healthcare careers, the center is positioning itself as a catalyst for change.

As the AIH-AHEC takes its place among the existing AHEC Regional Centers, its arrival symbolizes a strategic approach to bridging healthcare disparities. With a resolute commitment to improving healthcare access and outcomes for American Indian communities, the AIH-AHEC Regional Center sets forth on a journey that holds promise for a healthier future for Arizona's tribal populations.

The creation of a strategic plan to guide the AIH-AHEC through its first three years of operation marks the first of many successful steps in that journey.

Strategic Plan Development

AIH-AHEC Committee Members:

The creation of this three-year strategic plan for the American Indian Health Area Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC) was a collaborative effort spanning across multiple organizations throughout the state and includes the perspectives and concerns of tribal community members and leaders as well as valuable input from key stakeholders.

The Strategic Planning Committee consists of the following professionals:

- Timian Godfrey, U of A College of Nursing
- Frances Villescaz, GRHC
- Amy O'Neil, GRHC
- Jennifer Harvey, GRHC
- Anita Esquer, GRHC
- Agnes Attakai, U of A Health Disparities
- Navaz Dolasa, GRHC
- James Darragh, SCAHC
- Michael Allison, Community Advisor
- Deanna Sangster, AACIHC Council - Native Health
- Candida Hunter, AACIHC Council - FTF
- Cristine Holden, AACIHC Council - AHCCCS
- Sheryl Taylor, Cocopah Indian Tribe
- Kalvina Belin, FTF Tribal Liaison
- Holly Figueroa, ARHA
- Marianne M. Bennett, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
- Gerilene Haskon, ADHS Tribal Liaison
- Lillian Smith, NAU College of Health and Human Services
- John Molina, MD, Native Health
- Tashina Machain, AIH-AHEC Intern
- Kim Russell, AACIHC
- Mckayla Keams, AACIHC
- Jeff Axtell, AIH-AHEC

Committee members met on several occasions during 2023 to discuss and determine the most comprehensive and inclusive approach to developing a strategic plan that contains clear priority areas and objectives that are reflective of the healthcare education and workforce needs within Arizona's 22 unique tribes.

Those discussions resulted in the determination of five key priority areas for the AIH-AHEC to focus on during its first three years:

- Organizational Infrastructure
- Clinical and Educational Partnerships
- Current Workforce Professional Development
- Youth Pathway Programs
- Resource Development and Community Outreach

Strategic Plan Development

Development of Objectives for the Strategic Plan:

Committee members also helped brainstorm several objectives for each priority area. Once finalized, those objectives were entered into a survey tool and sent broadly throughout Arizona to tribal organizations, healthcare and workforce departments, tribal schools and colleges as well as tribal community leaders. In total, 37 responses were received and the following is a list of known survey respondents:*

- Northern Navajo Medical Center
- Mayo Clinic
- Phoenix Indian Medical/Mayo Arizona
- SCAT DHHS
- Northern Arizona University
- NACA
- UCSF HEAL Initiative
- UA College of Medicine Tucson
- The University of Arizona
- University of Arizona
- Hopi Cancer Support Services
- UA/UWA Global MD
- Colorado River Indian Tribes - CRIT
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona
- SRPMIC
- Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health
- University of Arizona - AIRCH
- WMAT Division of Health Programs
- University of Arizona -Pathway Scholars Program
- URBrian Fellowship, Native Women's Care Circle of Missouri, University of Missouri Hospital
- EMRIC
- IHS - Tucson Area Office
- The University of Arizona College of Medicine - Phoenix
- CDC NCCDPHP DPH
- NAU
- SRPMIC HHS Public Health

*Note: It wasn't mandatory for survey participants to enter identifying information so this list is not fully representative of all participating organizations.

Strategic Plan Development

Survey participants were asked to rank each objective according to their perceived order of importance. This exercise helped the strategic planning committee to determine which objectives were of greatest importance to include in the three year plan and which could be focused on at a later date or left out completely.

In order to ensure that important objectives or activities were not overlooked, survey participants were asked to provide additional suggestions for objectives or activities to include for each of the five priority areas in the strategic plan. These suggestions are included at the end of the plan by priority area.

The AIH-AHEC hired an outside consulting company to help facilitate the development of this strategic plan including survey creation, data gathering and analysis and report creation.

The AIH-AHEC strategic plan is intended to be a living document that is utilized significantly during the first three years of the program and adapted as needed to reflect the healthcare education and workforce needs and priorities of the 22 tribes served by the AIH-AHEC.



Organizational Infrastructure

I. Organizational Infrastructure - Objectives:

Year 1: Establishing the Foundation (2023-2024)

Advisory Council Formation:

Establish a diverse and knowledgeable Advisory Council, comprising members from medical, cultural, academic, and tribal communities, to provide comprehensive oversight and guidance to the AIH-AHEC program. Confirm the participation of at least ten (10) council members, each representing the specified priority areas, within the first six months of Year 1.

Mission and Vision Development:

Craft and publish AIH-AHEC's mission and vision with the Advisory Council within Year 1, reflecting its values, goals and direction.

Website Launch:

Design and launch a user-friendly, informative website for the AIH-AHEC program, showcasing clear program offerings, resources, events, and collaboration details. Ensure a fully functional website is rolled out by the spring of Year 1.

Marketing Awareness Campaign:

Execute a robust marketing strategy for AIH-AHEC, including branding, social media, and potential PR consultant engagement. Adjust based on metrics in Years 1 and 2.

Year 2: Expansion and Funding (2024-2025)

HRSA Funding Acquisition:

Collaborate with AZ-AHEC to secure Federal funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). This funding will provide critical financial support to sustain and enhance the AIH-AHEC program's initiatives, allowing for the development of impactful programs and services along with additional Tribal Facility Partners.

Staff Assessment and Growth:

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the program's operational needs and the services it aims to provide. Based on the assessment results, gradually expand the staff size, aiming to reach a team of five dedicated professionals by the end of year 3.

Organizational Infrastructure

I. Organizational Infrastructure - Objectives, Cont.:

Year 3: Sustainability and Impact (2025-2026)

Program Evaluation and Improvement:

Engage in an in-depth evaluation of the AIH-AHEC program's activities, outcomes, and impact on the AI Healthcare Workforce. Use the evaluation findings to identify areas of improvement and refine program strategies for maximum effectiveness and continued program implementation.

Strengthened Partnerships:

Foster strong collaborations with local tribal communities, academic institutions, healthcare organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. These partnerships will enrich the program's offerings, increase its outreach, and ensure its alignment with the Tribal community's needs.

Long-Term Sustainability Planning:

Develop a long-term sustainability plan for the AIH-AHEC program. This plan will outline strategies for continued growth, funding diversification, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders to ensure the program's enduring impact. Transition into the final year of the agreement with AzAHEC and develop a proposal for an additional 5-year agreement.

Community Engagement:

Enhance community engagement efforts by organizing workshops, seminars, and events that address the specific healthcare needs of the American Indian population. These activities will demonstrate the program's commitment to improving the health and well-being of the community, as well as introduce healthcare career opportunities to indigenous youth.

Please note that the Organizational Infrastructure objectives were not included in the community and key stakeholder survey. They were excluded as these are internal objectives specific just to the structure and formation of the AIH-AHEC.

Clinical & Educational Partnerships

II. Clinical & Educational Partnerships - Objectives

Resource & Partnership Building - Annually

Establishment of Clinical and Education Partnerships:

AIH-AHEC will secure two new formal partnerships annually with clinical and/or educational institutes, totaling eight by year 3; enhancing student learning and healthcare collaboration. The primary purpose of these partnerships is to ensure broad tribal community representation across the state.

Annual Job Resource List Creation:

AIH-AHEC will annually update a job resource list for new clinical graduates, aiding their career transitions

Training & Development - By Year 2

Mentorship Program Development:

By year 2, AIH-AHEC will establish a mentorship program supporting student career paths, boosting professional growth, and contributing to the retention of talent within tribal communities.

Health Professional Training Conference:

By the end of year 2, AIH-AHEC will organize and facilitate a conference in collaboration with partners. This conference will provide information on various opportunities and resources related to health professional training, including teaching health centers, CHAP, dental therapists, and other certificate programs.

Training for Non-Native Sites:

Within 2 years, AIH-AHEC will train non-native sites, enhancing healthcare training inclusivity, accessibility and cultural humility for students and community agencies.

Foundation & Partnership Building - By Year 3

Extended RN Internship Research:

By year 3, AIH-AHEC will research the viability of a 6 to 12-month extended RN internship program to enhance skills and career growth. This research will provide insight into the potential value of such internships in enhancing practical skills and career development.

Community Engagement and Contact Maintenance:

AIH-AHEC will create a system, by the end of the third year, that enables continuous contact with students from tribal communities, aiding recruitment and encouraging post-graduation return to their communities or tribes.

Youth Pathway Programs

III. Youth Pathway Programs - Objectives

Year 1: Research and Compile Healthcare Education Programs (2023-2024)

Summer Healthcare Programs:

Throughout the first year, compile and assess diverse summer healthcare programs tailored for Indigenous youth to identify valuable opportunities and possible collaborations.

Lessons Learned:

Present the San Carlos Apache Health Care Pathway program's accomplishments and lessons learned at the Pathways into Health conference and other events by the end of the first year.

Continuing Education:

Research and inventory existing continuing education opportunities available for healthcare professionals in Arizona, ensuring a comprehensive list for career enhancement; updated annually.

Entry-level Programs:

Annually evaluate high school entry-level programs in healthcare to determine scalability potential and alignment with industry needs.

Dual-Credit Programs:

Regularly assess and adapt the dual-credit opportunities provided through partnerships with tribal community colleges - throughout the three year project.

Year 2: Develop Education Programs (2024-2025)

Mentoring Program:

Establish an ongoing mentoring program, by the end of year 2, to introduce students to healthcare professionals who share similar backgrounds, inspiring them to pursue healthcare careers.

Internship Programs:

Develop structured introduction and internship programs for high school students, providing practical insights into healthcare careers and potential pathways, by year two.

Future Healthcare Leaders Program:

Foster partnerships with tribal community colleges to offer dual-credit opportunities through the "Future Healthcare Leaders" program, supporting high school students' college readiness. Have at least one partnership in place by the end of year two.

Pathways Into Health Conference

Organize and host the Pathways into Health conference by the end of year two, facilitating meaningful discussions on healthcare career pathways and innovation.

Youth Pathway Programs

III. Youth Pathway Programs - Objectives, Cont.:

Year 3: Maintain & Expand (2025-2026)

Future Healthcare Leaders:

By the end of year 3, create the "Future Healthcare Leaders" summer exploration program for American Indian youth at university/college sites, empowering them to explore healthcare careers.

Sustainability:

Throughout all 3 years, ensure the continued success and growth of ongoing initiatives, such as the mentoring program and high school introduction/internship programs.



Current Workforce Professional Development

IV. Current Workforce Professional Development - Objectives:

Year 1: Professional Development & Education (2023-2024)

CEU Series:

Plan and conduct a CEU series consisting of at least six (6) sessions for current health professionals on health issues or trends relevant to American Indian Healthcare and consistent with HRSA guidelines.

Loan Repayment Education

Distribute information to at least 100 current health professionals annually about loan repayment and other incentive programs for working in tribal healthcare facilities.

Year 2: Workforce Promotion and Development (2024-2025)

Healthcare Provider Conference:

Successfully organize and host an annual Indigenous Healthcare Provider Conference, attracting a minimum of 150 participants by the end of year two.

Leadership Development Tract:

Develop and implement a "Leadership Development Tract" program, transitioning at least 5 Tribal healthcare providers and staff into administrative and policy roles by the completion of year 2.

Summer Conference:

Attend and participate in a summer conference that focuses on high school counselors and/or another similar educational conference - starting in year two

Year 3: Scholarships and Professional Support (2025-2026)

Scholarships:

Provide scholarships to cover professional association membership fees and attendance at National AAIP and Nursing Leadership Meetings for Tribes for a minimum of 5 recipients by the end of year three.

Maintain Information Current:

During the three year period, maintain and update the comprehensive inventory of adult education and continuing education options for healthcare professionals.

V. Resource Development & Community Outreach - Objectives:

Year 1: Identify Partnerships and Develop Resources (2023-2024)

Foster Partnerships:

Create a partnership with the Indigenous Health Education and Resources Taskforce (IHEART) by the beginning of the first year to address healthcare workforce development for American Indians and establish a presence within the Southwest Region Cohort.

Partnership Expansion:

Annually Identify and track ways to partner with American Indian communities in their existing programs or initiatives that support "growing our own" health care workforce.

Networking and Contact Building:

Build a comprehensive health workforce contact list that includes representatives of all Tribes in Arizona, IHS, and Urban Indian health center

Resource Development:

Starting the first year create a resource guide for American Indian students pursuing a career in healthcare. By the end of the second year, establish a referral system to provide support for individuals needing to complete their GED for eligibility in health career pathway programs.

AIH-AHEC Scholars Program:

Develop and implement the American Indian Health - AHEC Scholars program, meeting state AHEC contract requirements for each cohort starting by end of year two.

Year 2: Program Development and Implementation (2024-2025)

Community Engagement and Understanding:

Conduct listening sessions with American Indian community leaders and members to better understand health workforce challenges and opportunities potentially through sessions at conferences held by AIH-AHEC during the second year of the program.

Local Retention and Recruitment:

Design and host workshops on career transitions and barriers, including topics like returning to work in hometowns, managing obstacles/cultural barriers, and continuing education.

Evaluation and Improvement:

Assess the effectiveness of the American Indian Health - AHEC Scholars program and workshops, making necessary improvements based on feedback and outcomes.

Resource Development and Community Outreach

V. Resource Development & Community Outreach - Objectives, Cont.:

Year 3: Community Engagement and Education (2025-2026)

Community Events:

Host at least 3 community events on specific health-related topics, as planned in year 1 by the end of year 3. .

Continued Collaboration and Engagement:

Continue collaboration with IHEART and Southwest Region to ensure ongoing efforts in healthcare workforce development for American Indians after the end of year three..



Conclusion

In conclusion, the creation of the strategic plan for the American Indian Health Area Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC) marks a significant milestone in the journey to address healthcare disparities within Arizona's American Indian communities. This comprehensive strategic plan is not only a product of collaboration but also a blueprint for the center's future endeavors.

The AIH-AHEC's strategic plan has emerged as a dynamic and forward-looking document, cultivated through the collective wisdom of tribal community members, leaders, and key stakeholders. This cooperative effort has identified five strategic priority areas: Organizational Infrastructure, Clinical and Educational Partnerships, Current Workforce Professional Development, Youth Pathway Programs, and Resource Development and Community Outreach. These areas provide a robust framework that will guide the AIH-AHEC's actions over the next three years and beyond.

What sets this strategic plan apart is its responsiveness to the evolving needs of Arizona's 22 unique tribal communities. By engaging a wide spectrum of voices and perspectives, the AIH-AHEC has ensured that the plan remains adaptable and reflective of the dynamic healthcare landscape. Moreover, the plan's formulation has been enriched by leveraging external consulting expertise, adding a layer of strategic insight that enhances its practicality and efficacy.

As a living document, the AIH-AHEC strategic plan is designed to serve as a compass for the center's operations and initiatives. Its establishment signifies the commitment to continuous improvement and the pursuit of healthcare equity for American Indian communities. Over the next three years, the plan will not only drive the AIH-AHEC's activities but also facilitate agile course corrections as the center navigates the complex terrain of healthcare education and workforce needs.

Anchored by this strategic plan, the AIH-AHEC is poised to make meaningful strides in enhancing healthcare accessibility, workforce capacity, and outcomes for Arizona's tribal populations, ultimately fostering a healthier and more equitable future.



Three Year STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan made possible with support from the Arizona
Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program funding

801 E. Jefferson Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85034
928-714-6925