



April 20, 2026

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, wishes to initiate a virtual Tribal Consultation to help inform the expansion of the Strong Heart Study research program. The Tribal Consultation is to be held May 19, 2026, from 4:00 to 5:30 ET. Your participation in this timely discussion is important as your input will help ensure that the next phase of this critical research program meets the needs and represents the inputs of your community.

The NHLBI has supported the research program known as the Strong Heart Study for more than three decades. This program focuses on finding health factors and information that can support improved and optimal heart, lung, blood, and sleep health in American Indian (AI) communities. Knowledge gained from the Strong Heart Study has added to Native American communities learning how to improve their health. As an example, the Strong Heart Study found that AIs with diabetes have a higher risk of developing heart disease. These findings contributed toward the establishment of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) program. Recently, the Study has found specific environmental factors like high levels of arsenic in drinking water is associated with a higher risk for heart disease. Due to these findings, there is now an intervention to reduce arsenic levels in well water in Indian Country. The Study has also helped promote community engagement in research and health promotion by funding projects led by and for community members such as walking clubs, cooking classes, and health classes.

NHLBI is seeking your input as we prepare to re-issue the Strong Heart Study, potentially broadening eligibility to more Tribes and Alaska Native (AN) Villages. We value your guidance and input to learn how best to increase AI/AN participation in the Strong Heart Study program funding opportunity and to assure the Tribe's priorities are met. More detail about the proposed changes and expansion to the Strong Heart Study program can be found in the accompanying "Framing letter".

During Tribal Consultation, we invite your feedback and guidance on the following questions:

- There are several new components planned for in this next phase of the Strong Heart Study. What are your thoughts on these new program components?
- As we implement the Strong Heart Study program and potential new components, how might we build better partnerships between Native American communities, Native Serving Organizations, and researchers to generate findings that support healthier communities?
- It may be misinterpreted that the new Strong Heart Study program funding opportunities will simply be renewals of the current work with the same communities. How can we

promote the potentially new opportunity, its open nature, and our desire to enhance and broaden the Study's focus and Tribal community engagement?

- As NHLBI honors Tribal sovereignty and Tribal data sovereignty, we would be interested in any effective approaches that you've found or heard about for implementing and ensuring Indigenous data sovereignty and privacy in research studies.

Participant information:

What: NIH Tribal Consultation on an Upcoming Funding Announcement for Expansion of the Strong Heart Study

Date: May 19, 2026

Time: 4:00 p.m. ET (3:00 p.m. CT, 2:00 p.m. MT, 1:00 p.m. PT)

Registration link: <https://forms.office.com/g/K8RVQ7XH2u>

For technical meeting questions related to connectivity or audio/visual matters, please contact Chad Lee (chad.lee@nih.gov) or Tuan Le (tuan.le@nih.gov).

If you are unable to attend, we invite you to send written testimony, comments, or questions to NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov by June 22.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Dr. David Goff at NHLBIODCENTRAL@mail.nih.gov.

Thank you for your continued partnership as we work together to improve the health of Native American communities through research. We look forward to this opportunity to listen and learn from you.

Sincerely,

David C. Goff, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.
Acting Director, NHLBI