

Proposed Expansion of the Strong Heart Study (SHS)

This document provides an overview for Tribal Leaders to participate in the upcoming **National Institutes of Health (NIH) Tribal Consultation regarding the potential expansion of the Strong Heart Study (SHS) research program**. The purpose of this consultation is to seek Tribal input on proposed research components and approaches before decisions are made.

Date: May 19, 2026

Time: 4:00 – 5:30 PM ET (3:00 p.m. CT, 2:00 p.m. MT, 1:00 p.m. PT)

Location: Virtual (registration details below)

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

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), NIH

The NIH mission is to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. The NHLBI, part of the NIH, provides global leadership for research, training, and education programs to promote the prevention and treatment of heart, lung, blood, and sleep disorders. NHLBI is committed to advancing health equity and improving health outcomes for all communities, including American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations.

The NHLBI/NIH respectfully invites Tribal leaders or their designees to participate in a Tribal Consultation regarding the potential expansion of the Strong Heart Study (SHS) research program. NHLBI recognizes the sovereign status of Tribal Nations and is committed to engaging in meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Purpose of Consultation

NHLBI is exploring an expansion of the Strong Heart Study, a long-standing research partnership with American Indian (AI) communities focused on understanding and addressing heart, lung, blood, and sleep health diseases and conditions within these communities.

Through this consultation, NHLBI seeks Tribal input to help inform:

- The research priorities for future research opportunities
- Approaches to strengthening partnerships between Tribal communities and researchers
- Considerations related to data governance, privacy, and Indigenous data sovereignty
- Strategies to ensure broad and equitable awareness of and access to funding opportunities for the study renewal

Input received will help shape NHLBI's planning and decision-making prior to releasing any future funding announcements.

Strong Heart Study

The Strong Heart Study was initiated in 1988 to address limited data on cardiovascular disease among Native American populations. It has since become the longest-running, largest epidemiological study of heart, lung, blood, and sleep disorders in AI communities, with participation across regions including Oklahoma, Arizona, and the Northern Plains.

The study has contributed to important insights into health conditions and risk factors and has supported community-engaged research approaches. Findings have informed public health programs and community-led health initiatives.

Building on this history, NHLBI is considering an expansion of the SHS that may include:

- Recruitment of a new cohort of **younger AI/AN adult participants**
- **Expanding** partnerships with **new Tribal communities and Native Serving Organizations**, and continuing existing study partnerships where desired

NHLBI seeks Tribal guidance to ensure that any future effort reflects Tribal priorities, respects cultural values, and supports meaningful and equitable partnerships.

Consultation Questions

NHLBI respectfully requests feedback on the following questions:

1. **Program Design:** What are your perspectives on the proposed new components of the Strong Heart Study, including the potential focus on younger AI/AN adult populations?
2. **Partnerships:** What strategies would help strengthen partnerships between Tribal communities and researchers to ensure that research outcomes are meaningful, culturally appropriate, and beneficial to communities?
3. **Access and Awareness:** How can NHLBI effectively communicate and promote this opportunity to ensure it is broadly accessible to Tribal communities, including those not currently aware of or participating in the SHS?
4. **Indigenous Data Sovereignty:** What approaches or best practices should NHLBI consider ensuring that Tribal data sovereignty is honored, inclusive of appropriate data governance, and privacy protections?

Logistics and Participation

- **Who should attend:** Tribal leaders or their designees
- **Format:** Virtual consultation session
- **Registration:** <https://forms.office.com/g/K8RVQ7XH2u>

- **Written Comments:** NHLBI welcomes written comments in addition to or in lieu of oral testimony. Please submit comments to: NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov by June 22, 2026.
- **Contact for Questions:** Dr. David Goff, Acting Director, NHLBI at NHLBIODCENTRAL@mail.nih.gov.

Use of Tribal Input

NHLBI is committed to considering all input received during this consultation. Feedback will be reviewed and used to inform planning and decision-making related to the potential expansion of the Strong Heart Study. A summary of Tribal input may be shared following the consultation, consistent with applicable policies.

NHLBI appreciates your time, expertise, and continued partnership.