

Written comments and recommendations concerning the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of this notice to: John Kraemer, Human Resources and Housing Branch, Office of Management and Budget, New Executive Office Building, Room 10235, Washington, D.C. 20503.

Dated: December 13, 2005.

Tina M. Cheatham,

Director, Division of Policy Review and Coordination.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Indian Health Service

Loan Repayment Program for Repayment of Health Professions Educational Loans

Announcement Type: Initial.

CFDA Number: 93.164.

Key Dates: Beginning of 2006 Award Period: January 20, 2006; Ending of 2006 Award Period: September 30, 2006.

1. Funding Opportunity Description

The Indian Health Service (IHS) estimated budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 includes \$11,698,754 for the Indian Health Service (IHS) Loan Repayment Program (LRP) for health professional educational loans (undergraduate and graduate) in return for full-time clinical service in Indian health programs.

This program announcement is subject to the appropriation of funds. This notice is being published early to coincide with the recruitment activity of the IHS, which competes with other Government and private health management organizations to employ qualified health professionals.

This program is authorized by Section 108 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) as amended, 25 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.* The IHS invites potential applicants to request an application for participation in the LRP.

Funds appropriated for the LRP in FY 2006 will be distributed among the health professions as follows: Allopathic/osteopathic practitioners will receive 27 percent, registered nurses 20 percent, mental health professionals 10 percent, dentists 12 percent, pharmacists 10 percent, optometrists 5 percent, physician assistants/advanced practice nurses 6 percent, podiatrists 4 percent, physical therapists 2 percent, other professions 4

percent. This requirement does not apply if the number of applicants from these groups, respectively, is not sufficient to meet the requirement.

H. Award Information

It is anticipated that \$11,698,754 will be available to support approximately 253 competing awards averaging \$46,250 per award for a two year contract. One year contract continuations will receive priority consideration in any award cycle. Applicants selected for participation in the FY 2006 program cycle will be expected to begin their service period no later than September 30, 2006.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to Section 108(b), to be eligible to participate in the LRP, an individual must:

- (1) (A) Be enrolled—
 - (i) In a course of study or program in an accredited institution, as determined by the Secretary, within any State and be scheduled to complete such course of study in the same year such individual applies to participate in such program; or
 - (ii) In an approved graduate training program in a health profession; or
- (B) Have a degree in a health profession and a license to practice in a state; and
- (2)(A) Be eligible for, or hold an appointment as a Commissioned Officer in the Regular or Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service (PHS); or
- (B) Be eligible for selection for civilian service in the Regular or Reserve Corps of the (PHS); or
- (C) Meet the professional standards for civil service employment in the IHS; or
- (D) Be employed in an Indian health program without service obligation; and
- (E) Submit to the Secretary an applicant for a contract to the Loan Repayment Program. The Secretary must approve the contract before the disbursement of loan repayments can be made to the participant. Participants will be required to fulfill their contract service agreements through full-time clinical practice at an Indian health program site determined by the Secretary. Loan repayment sites are characterized by physical, cultural, and professional isolation, and have histories of frequent staff turnover. All Indian health program sites are annually prioritized within the Agency by discipline, based on need or vacancy.

Section 108 of the IHCIA, as amended by Public Laws 100-713 and 102-573, authorizes the IHS LRP and provides in pertinent part as follows:

(a)(1) The Secretary, acting through the Service, shall establish a program to be known as the Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program (hereinafter referred to as the "Loan Repayment Program") in order to assure an adequate supply of trained health professionals necessary to maintain accreditation of, and provide health care services to Indians through, Indian health programs.

Section 4(n) of the IHCIA, as amended by the Indian Health Care Improvement Technical Corrections Act of 1996, Public Law 104-313, provides that:

"Health Profession" means *allopathic medicine*, family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, geriatric medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatric medicine, nursing, public health nursing, dentistry, psychiatry, osteopathy, optometry, pharmacy, psychology, public health, social work, marriage and family therapy, chiropractic medicine, environmental health and engineering, and allied health profession, or any other health profession.

For the purposes of this program the term "Indian health program" is defined in Section 108(a)(2)(A), as follows:

(A) The term "Indian health program" means any health program or facility funded, in whole or in part, by the Service for the benefit of Indians and administered—

- (i) Directly by the Service;
- (ii) By any Indian tribe or tribal or Indian organization pursuant to a contract under—
 - (I) The Indian Self-Determination Act, or
 - (II) Section 23 of the Act of April 30, 1908, (25 U.S.C. 47), popularly known as the Buy Indian Act; or
 - (iii) By an urban Indian organization pursuant to title V of this act.

Section 108 of the IHCIA, as amended by Public Laws 100-713 and 102-573, authorizes the IHS to determine specific health professions for which Indian Health Loan Repayment contracts will be awarded. The list of priority health professions that follow are based upon the needs of the IHS as well as upon the needs of the American Indians and Alaska Natives.

- (a) Medicine: Allopathic and Osteopathic
- (b) Nurse: Associate and B.S. Degree
- (c) Clinical Psychology: Ph.D. only
- (d) Social Work: Masters level only (concentration in Mental Health)
- (e) Chemical Dependency Counseling: Baccalaureate and Masters level
- (f) Dentistry
- (g) Dental Hygiene
- (h) Pharmacy: B.S., Pharm.D.
- (i) Optometry
- (j) Physician Assistant
- (k) Advanced Practice Nurses: Nurse Practitioner, Certified Nurse

- Midwife, Registered Nurse
Anesthetist (Priority consideration
will be given to Registered Nurse
Anesthetists.)
- (l) Podiatry: D.P.M.
(m) Physical Therapy: M.S. and D.P.T.
(n) Diagnostic Radiology Technology:
Certificate, Associate, and B.S.
(o) Medical Technology: B.S.
(p) Public Health Nutritionist/Registered
Dietitian
(q) Engineering (Civil and
Environmental): B.S. (Engineers
must provide environmental
engineering services to be eligible)
(r) Environmental Health (Sanitarian):
B.S.
(s) Health Records: R.H.I.T. and R.H.I.A.
(t) Respiratory Therapy
(u) Ultrasonography

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Not applicable.

3. Other Requirements

Interested individuals are reminded that the list of eligible health and allied health professions is effective for applicants for FY 2006. These priorities will remain in effect until superseded.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application materials may be obtained by calling or writing to the address below. In addition, completed applications should be returned to: IHS Loan Repayment Program, 801 Thompson Avenue, Suite 120, Rockville, Maryland 20852, PH: 301/443-3396 [between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (EST) Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays].

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications must be submitted on the form entitled "Application for the Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program," identified with the Office of Management and Budget approval number of OMB #0917-0014 (expires 12/31/05).

3. Submission Dates and Times

Completed applications may be submitted to the IHS Loan Repayment Program, 801 Thompson Avenue, Suite 120, Rockville, Maryland 20852. Applications for the FY 2006 LRP will be accepted and evaluated monthly beginning January 20, 2006 and will continue to be accepted each month thereafter until all funds are exhausted for FY 2006. Subsequent monthly deadline dates are scheduled for Friday of the second full week of each month.

Applications shall be considered as meeting the deadline if they are either:

- (a) Received on or before the deadline date; or
(b) Sent on or before the deadline date. (Applicants should request a legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark or obtain a legibly dated receipt from a commercial carrier or U.S. Postal Service. Private metered postmarks are *not* acceptable as proof of timely mailing.)

Applications received after the monthly closing date will be held for consideration in the next monthly funding cycle. Applicants who do not receive funding by September 30, 2006, will be notified in writing.

4. Intergovernmental Review

This program is not subject to review under Executive Order 12372.

5. Funding Restrictions

Not applicable.

6. Other Submission Requirements

All applicants must sign and submit to the Secretary, a written contract agreeing to accept repayment of educational loans and to serve for the applicable period of obligated service in a priority site as determined by the Secretary, and submit a signed affidavit attesting to the fact that they have been informed of the relative merits of the U.S. PHS Commissioned Corps and the Civil Service as employment options.

V. Application Review Information

1. Criteria

The IHS has identified the positions in each Indian health program for which there is a need or vacancy and ranked those positions in order of priority by developing discipline-specific prioritized lists of sites. Ranking criteria for these sites include the following:

- (a) Historically critical shortages caused by frequent staff turnover;
(b) Current unmatched vacancies in a Health Profession Discipline;
(c) Projected vacancies in a Health Profession Discipline;
(d) Ensuring that the staffing needs of Indian health programs administered by an Indian Tribe or Tribal or health organization receive consideration on an equal basis with programs that are administered directly by the Service;
(e) Giving priority to vacancies in Indian health programs that have a need for health professionals to provide health care services as a result of individuals having breached LRP contracts entered into under this section.

Consistent with this priority ranking, in determining applications to be

approved and contracts to accept, the IHS will give priority to applications made by American Indians and Alaska Natives and to individuals recruited through the efforts of Indian Tribes or Tribal or Indian organizations.

2. Review and Selection Process

Loan Repayment Awards will be made only to those individuals serving at facilities which have a site score of 70 or above during the first and second quarters and the first month of the third quarter of FY 2006, if funding is available.

One or all of the following factors may be applicable to an applicant, and the applicant who has the most of these factors, all other criteria being equal, would be selected.

(a) An applicant's length of current employment in the IHS, Tribal, or urban program.

(b) Availability for service earlier than other applicants (first come, first served).

(c) Date the individual's application was received.

3. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Not applicable.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Notice of awards will be mailed on the last working day of each month. Once the applicant is approved for participation in the LRP, the applicant will receive confirmation of his/her loan repayment award and the duty site at which he/she will serve his/her loan repayment obligation.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Applicants may sign contractual agreements with the Secretary for 2 years. The IHS will repay all, or a portion of the applicant's health profession educational loans (undergraduate and graduate) for tuition expenses and reasonable educational and living expenses in amounts up to \$20,000 per year for each year of contracted service. Payments will be made annually to the participant for the purpose of repaying his/her outstanding health profession educational loans. Payment of health profession education loans will be made to the participant within 120 days, from the date the contract becomes effective.

In addition to the loan repayments, participants are provided tax assistance payments in an amount not less than 20 percent and not more than 39 percent of the participant's total amount of loan repayments made for the taxable year

involved. The loan repayments and the tax assistance payments are taxable income and will be reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The tax assistance payment will be paid to the IRS directly on the participant's behalf. LRP award recipients should be aware that the IRS may place them in a higher bracket than they would otherwise have been prior to their award.

3. Reporting

Any individual who enters this program and satisfactorily completes his or her obligated period of service may apply to extend his/her contract on a year-by-year basis, as determined by the IHS. Participants extending their contracts will receive up to the maximum amount of \$20,000 per year plus an additional 20 percent for Federal Withholding. Participants who were awarded loan repayment contracts prior to FY 2000 will be awarded extensions up to the amount of \$30,000 a year and 31 percent in tax subsidy if funds are available, and will not exceed the total of the individual's outstanding eligible health profession educational loans.

Any individual who owes an obligation for health professional service to the Federal Government, a State, or other entity is not eligible for the LRP unless the obligation will be completely satisfied before they begin service under this program.

VII. Agency Contacts

Please address inquiries to Ms. Jacqueline K. Santiago, Chief, IHS Loan Repayment Program, 801 Thompson Avenue, Suite 120, Rockville, Maryland 20852, PH: 301/443-3396 (between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (EST) Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.)

VIII. Other Information

The IHS Area Offices and Service Units are authorized to provide additional funding to make awards to applicants in the LRP, but must be in compliance with any limits in the appropriation and Section 108 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act not to exceed the amount authorized in the IHS appropriation (up to \$27,000,000 for FY 2006).

Should an IHS Area Office contribute to the LRP, those funds will be used for only those sites located in that Area. Those sites will retain their relative ranking from the national site-ranking list. For example, the Albuquerque Area Office identifies supplemental monies for dentists. Only the dental positions within the Albuquerque Area will be funded with the supplemental monies

consistent with the national ranking and site index within that Area.

Should an IHS Service Unit contribute to the LRP, those funds will be used for only those sites located in that Service Unit. Those sites will retain their relative ranking from the national site-ranking list. For example, Chinle Service Unit identifies supplemental monies for pharmacists. The Chinle Service Unit consists of two facilities, namely the Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility and the Tsaile PHS Indian Health Center. The national ranking will be used for the Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility (Score = 44) and the Tsaile PHS Indian Health Center (Score = 46). With a score of 46, the Tsaile PHS Indian Health Center would receive priority over the Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility.

Dated: December 12, 2005.

Robert G. McSwain,

Deputy Director, Indian Health Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of the Secretary

[Docket No. DHS-2005-0044]

Homeland Security Advisory Council

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security.

ACTION: Notice of Federal advisory committee meeting.

SUMMARY: The Homeland Security Advisory Council will hold a meeting to receive reports and briefings and to hold member deliberations. This meeting will be partially closed to the public as authorized under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

DATES: *Meeting date:* Tuesday, January 10, 2006.

Comments date: If you desire to submit comments, they must be submitted by January 3, 2006.

ADDRESSES: The open portions of the meeting for the purpose of receiving Task Force reports and updates will be held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 1330 Maryland Avenue Southwest, Washington, DC in Grand Ballroom A from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The closed portions of the meeting for the purpose of receiving detailed critical infrastructure briefings will be held in a separate venue closed to the public at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 1330 Maryland Avenue Southwest,

Washington, DC from 8 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. and from 12:10 p.m. to 3 p.m.

You may submit comments, identified by DHS-2005-0044, by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>.

- *E-mail:* HSAC@dhs.gov. Include docket number in the subject line of the message.

- *Fax:* (202) 772-9718.

- *Mail:* Mike Miron, Homeland Security Advisory Council, Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC 20528.

Instructions: All submissions received must include the Department of Homeland Security and DHS-2005-0044, the docket number for this action. Comments received will be posted without alteration at <http://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information provided.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments received by the DHS Data Privacy and Integrity Committee, go to <http://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mike Miron, Homeland Security Advisory Council, Washington, DC 20528, (202) 692-4283, HSAC@dhs.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: At the upcoming meeting, the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) will receive reports from the Critical Infrastructure Task Force and the Prevention of the Entry of Weapons of Mass Effect on American Soil Task Force. It also will receive updates from the Private Sector Information Sharing and Fusion Center Task Forces. Additionally, the HSAC will receive detailed briefings covering specific critical infrastructure vulnerabilities, interdependencies, infrastructure resilience, and vulnerability mitigation. The HSAC will also hold roundtable deliberations and discussions among HSAC members, including discussions regarding administrative matters.

Public Attendance: A limited number of members of the public may register to attend the public session on a first-come, first-served basis. Security requires that any member of the public who wishes to attend the public session provide his or her name and date of birth, no later than 5 p.m. e.s.t., Tuesday, January 03, 2006, to Mike Miron or an Executive Staff Member of the HSAC via e-mail at HSAC@dhs.gov or via phone at (202) 692-4283. Persons with disabilities who require special assistance should so indicate in their admittance request and are encouraged to indicate their desires to attend and anticipated special needs as early as