

The American Indian Health - Area Health Education Center Program (AIH-AHEC)

Jeff Axtell, M.Ed.

Director

April 17, 2024



**AMERICAN INDIAN
HEALTH-AHEC**



PURPOSE

Per ARS 6-2902.01 the AACIHC is established to give tribal governments, tribal organizations and urban Indian health care organizations in this state, representation in shaping Medicaid and health care policies and laws that impact the populations they serve.

- Legislative Advocacy
- Administrative Advocacy



MISSION

The mission of the AACIHC is to advocate for increasing access to high quality health care programs for all American Indians in Arizona.

VISION

The AACIHC strives to be the premier resource for Tribes and Urban Indians in Arizona on American Indian health care.

The Path to Fruition



Tribal Convening

- In April 2012, Tribes and other stakeholders convened at the Arizona American Indian Pathways Into Health Conference
 - to share successful health career pathway pilot models
 - to share strategies for increasing the number of American Indians pursuing health professions
- Overall agreement to “**Growing Our Own**” Health care providers



Strategies Identified

- Health Career Pathways Pipeline, Education to Employment
 - Creation of an assessment map
- Create a Statewide Strategic Plan
 - Coordination of resources and programs across agencies (Tribes, State, Federal)
- Statewide Advocacy
 - Prioritize the Issue
 - Grassroots level

AACIHC Strategic Plan

- In October 2017, the AACIHC updated their strategic plan
 - Goal: Expand the American Indian health care workforce.
 - Objective: Establish an Arizona American Indian Area Health Education Center



Advocacy

- Fall to Winter 2018:
 - Informed Tribes and other organizations of AHEC initiative and secured support
 - Drafted bill language & Identified Prime Sponsor
 - AACIHC members and staff met with key tribal and state leadership and the Governor’s Office
- December 10, 2018
 - AACIHC passed Resolution 03-2018: “Support for the Creation of a 6th AHEC that Focuses on the Indian Health System”



A.R.S. 15-1643. Arizona area health education system;
centers; 5 governing boards; duties

- B. The system shall consist of ~~five~~SIX area health education centers administered by the director of the Arizona area health education system. Each center shall represent a geographic area with specified populations that the system determines currently lack services by the health care professions. **ONE CENTER SHALL FOCUS ON THE INDIAN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM.**

2019 Legislative Session

- SB 1174 - Arizona health education centers; increase
- Prime Sponsor: Sen. Heather Carter (LD-15), Chair, Higher Education and Workforce Development (HEWD)
- SENATE:
 - Passed out of the HEWD Committee and Rules Committee
 - Passed unanimously out of the Senate
- HOUSE:
 - Passed out of the Education Committee
 - Died in the Rules Committee as it didn't receive a hearing.

Advocacy

- Fall to Winter 2019:
 - Informed more Tribes and other organizations of 6th AHEC initiative and secured more support
 - Drafted bill language & Identified Prime Sponsor
 - AACIHC members and staff met with key tribal and state leadership and the Governor's Office

2020 Legislative Session

- HB 2296- Arizona health education centers; increase
- Prime Sponsor: Rep. T.J. Shope (LD-8)
- HOUSE:
 - Passed out of the Education Committee and Rules Committee
 - Passed unanimously out of the House
- SENATE:
 - Assigned to the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee and Rules Committee
 - Died in the Senate as it didn't receive a hearing in either Committee



More Advocacy and Support

- Resolutions
 - Navajo Nation, San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Carlos Apache Health Care Corporation, Inter Tribal Association of Arizona and others
 - Tribes/Organizations/Individuals signed into the Request to Speak System as being in support
 - Testimony
- Joint Tribal Consultation with Tribes to discuss 6th AHEC Initiative (U of A, AACIHC, and ADHS)
 - October 23, 2020



2021 Legislative Session

- HB 2294 dropped in House and SB 1301 dropped in Senate
- SB 1301 – Arizona health education centers; increase
- Prime Sponsor: Rep. T.J. Shope (LD-8)
- SENATE:
 - Assigned to the Education Committee and Rules Committee
 - Unanimously Passed the Senate
- HOUSE:
 - Assigned to the Education Committee and Rules Committee
 - Unanimously Passed the House



AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTERS

To advocate for increasing access to high quality health care programs for all American Indians in Arizona.



AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTERS

The Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program is a HRSA grant program that supports networks of community-based health education and training. The program was developed by Congress in 1971 to recruit, train, and retain a health workforce committed to underserved populations. AHEC programs and centers are located in most states serving over 85% of U.S. counties. AHEC's partner with academic institutions, community organizations, and health care providers to increase diversity, broaden distribution, enhance quality, and improve delivery of health care in rural and underserved areas.

There are 56 AHEC programs and 236 regional centers in 47 states.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Arizona AHEC
Area Health Education Centers

The mission of the Arizona AHEC Program is to enhance access to quality healthcare, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals through academic-community educational partnerships in rural and urban medically underserved areas.

Arizona's first regional AHEC center opened in Nogales in 1984. Today, six regional centers are serving Arizona by supporting health professions education, providing continuing education for health professionals, and addressing health disparities and local health workforce issues. Our programs support development of our children, health professions students, and health professions workforce as well as recruitment and retention of a highly skilled health professions workforce. The regional centers also support many health careers programs including students in medicine (both allopathic and osteopathic medical students), nursing, pharmacy, public health, dentistry, and allied health.

ARIZONA AHEC FEDERAL FUNDING

AzAHEC receives Federal funding from Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Health Professions through a competitive continuation grant submitted every five years.

During each year of the grant, HRSA requires that AHECs submit various progress (narrative), performance (data), and financial reports. To facilitate this information, the AzAHEC Program Office requests information throughout the year from Regional Centers and other subcontractors/partners.

HRSA requires: 1) 1:1 matching non-federal funds, 2) a minimum of \$250,000 of funding (match + federal) for each AHEC Regional Center, and 3) that the Regional Center service areas not overlap.

Arizona AHEC State Funding

There are AHECs in almost every U.S. State. AzAHEC is one of the few states that receive both Federal and State support.

Arizona AHEC receives statutory state funding from the Arizona State Lottery (A.R.S. § 5-572C) to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR). State Lottery Funds supply the required match to receive the federal funds for Regional Centers, and additionally fund other initiatives consistent with the mission of AzAHEC.

An annual report is required of AzAHEC by the State of Arizona at the end of each fiscal year. To facilitate this information, the AHEC Program Office requests information from Regional Centers and other subcontractors/partners.



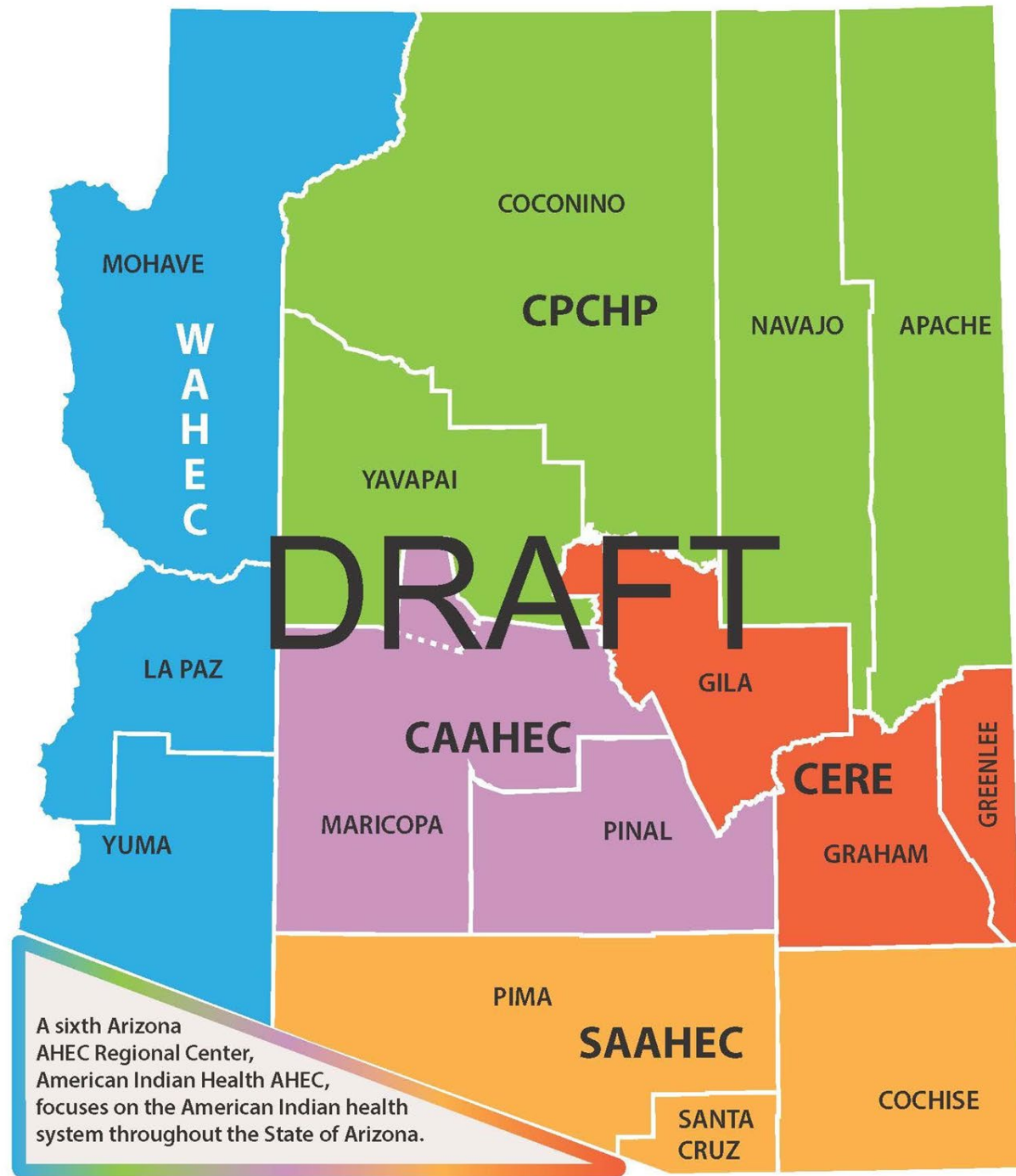
AIH-AHEC Funding

As of July 2022, State Lottery funds support the American Indian Health - AHEC Regional Center and the five other Regional Centers; nine Rural Health Professions Programs, South Campus Medical Residency, as well as other programs consistent with AzAHEC Mission.

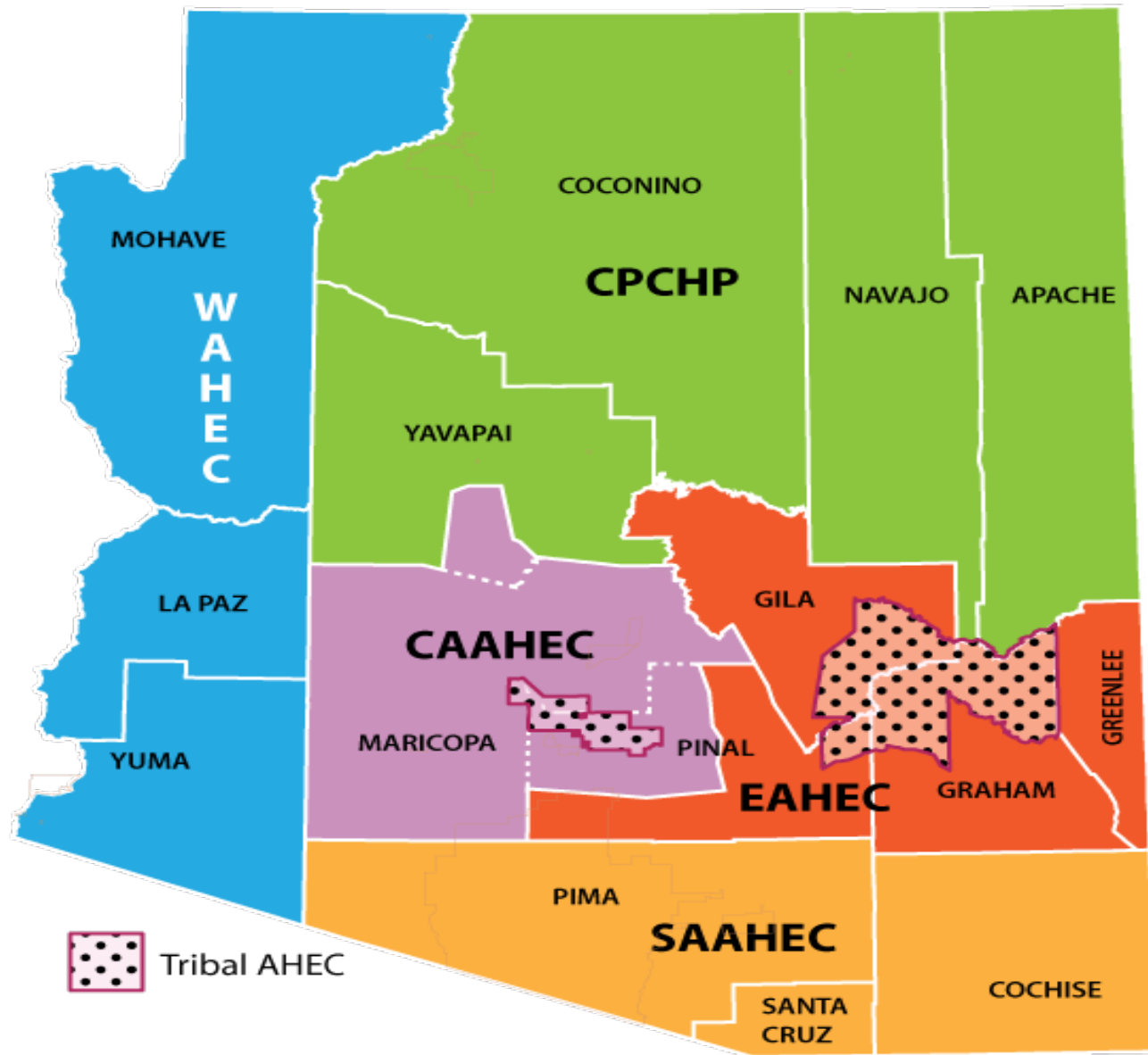
In its 2022 five-year competing continuing proposal for federal funds, AzAHEC *requested federal support for the Tribal American Indian Regional AHEC Center* in addition to continuing to receive federal support for the other five Regional Centers. While federal funds are currently only permitted to be used to support five regional centers, the activities outlined in this presentation lay the foundation for the Tribal American Indian Regional AHEC Center to meet federal funding requirements.

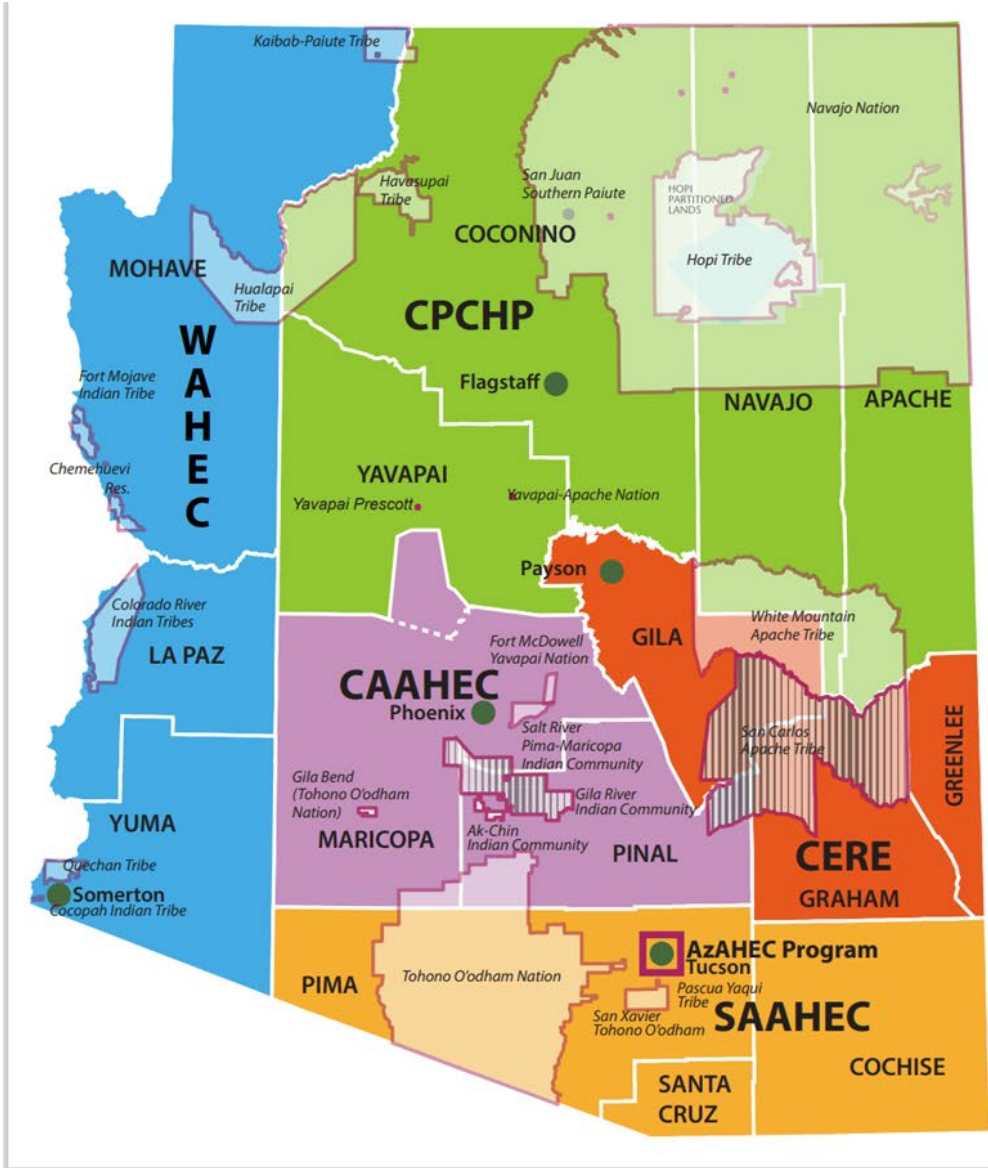
All activities that meet federal reporting guidelines, regardless of the source of the support, are reported to HRSA.

It is anticipated that the AIH-AHEC will receive HRSA funding beginning in September 2024.



A sixth Arizona AHEC Regional Center, American Indian Health AHEC, focuses on the American Indian health system throughout the State of Arizona.





Arizona AHEC Regions and Tribal Nations in Arizona

-  Tribal Nations
-  Arizona Area Health Education Center Program (AzAHEC) Tucson
-  American Indian Health Area Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC)
-  Southern Arizona Area Health Education Center (SAAHEC)
-  Central Arizona Area Health Education Center (CAAHEC)
-  Center for Excellence in Rural Education AHEC (CERE)
-  Colorado Plateau Center for Health Professions AHEC (CPCHP)
-  Western Arizona Area Health Education Center (WAHEC)





 American Indian Health Area Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC)

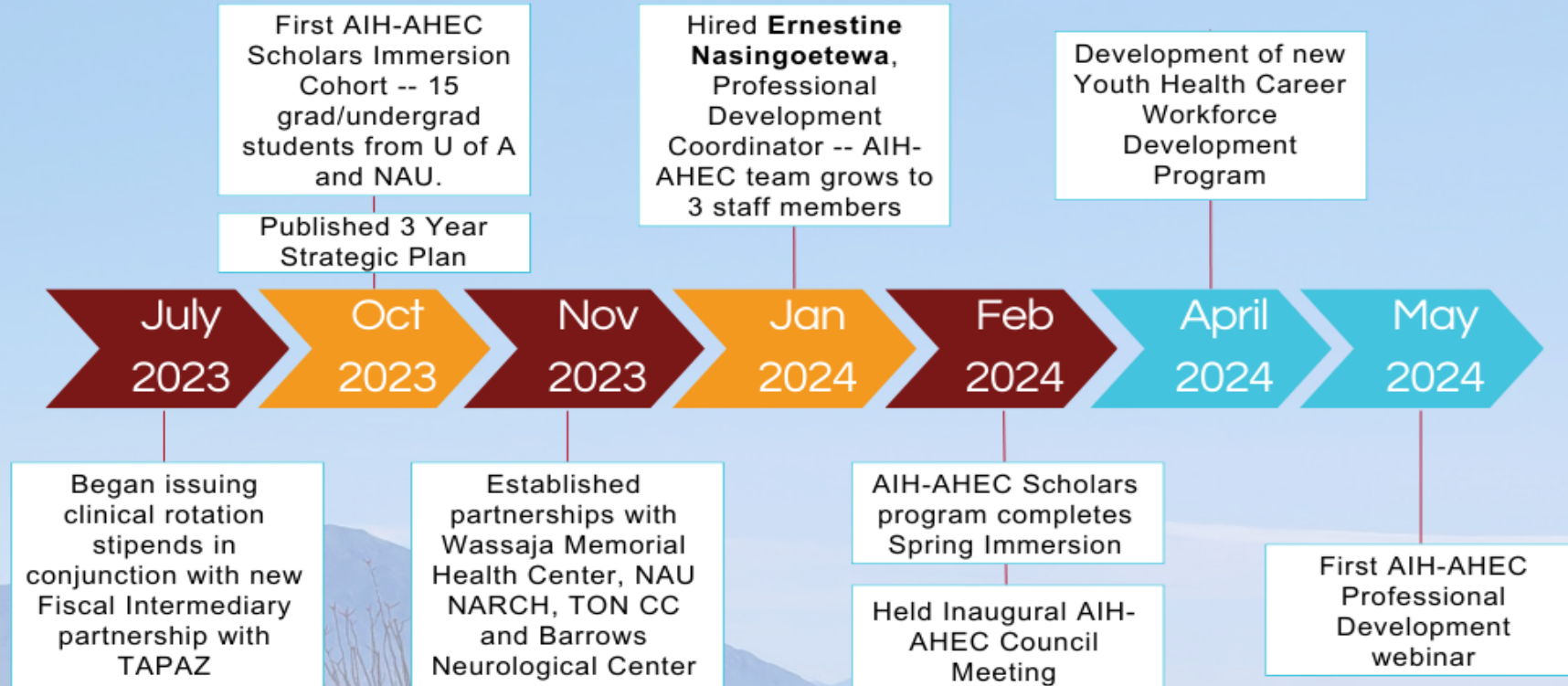
SETTING UP THE AIH-AHEC

Key milestones and critical events in establishing the foundation of AIH-AHEC



SETTING UP THE AIH-AHEC

Key milestones and critical events in establishing the foundation of AIH-AHEC



A desert landscape featuring several tall saguaro cacti in the foreground and a range of rugged mountains in the background under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text "AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH- AHEC" is overlaid in the center in a teal, sans-serif font.

AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH- AHEC

American Indian Health - AHEC Indigenous Community Focus

1. Community-based Experiential Training (CBET) for clinical rotations
2. AHEC Scholars Community Immersion Program for undergraduate and graduate students
3. Continuing Education/Professional Development for Health Care Professionals currently working with I/T/U facilities
4. 9th-12th grade structured pathway activities and college preparation
5. K-8 grades unstructured pathway activities for introduction into healthcare careers
6. Community events on health-related topics towards advancing health equities and reducing disparities
7. Nurture growth within the American Indian Health Care Workforce in all of Arizona's 22 Tribal Communities



Community Based Experiential Training

- AIH-AHEC supports undergraduate and graduate students with clinical rotations and internship placements along with travel stipends for expenses associated with their Tribal facility placements
- Tribal Collaborations: Gila River Health Care and San Carlos Apache Healthcare, currently working with Native Health and Hopi Health Care Center
 - AIH-AHEC is working with GRHC and SCAHC professional staff to secure student clinical rotations within medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, speech therapy, podiatry and dentistry for undergraduate and graduate students



AIH-AHEC Scholars Program

The Arizona AHEC Scholars Program (ASP) is a two-year interprofessional program for health profession undergraduate and graduate students. It is comprised of community-based experiential training conducted in rural and/or underserved settings in one of the Arizona AHEC Regions.

- AHEC Scholars commit to 80 hours each year for two years (didactic + community experiential learning).
- Participate in reflection, active learning and critical inquiry in a group setting with students from various health professions programs.
- Engage directly and indirectly with rural and/or underserved communities and guided by their Faculty Mentor and AIH-AHEC Regional Center Director and team.
- Learn about factors affecting the social determinants of health, cultural competency, behavioral health integration, practice transformation, inter-professional education, current and emerging health issues, connecting communities and supporting health professionals.

First AIH-AHEC Scholars Cohort 2023-24





Continuing Education/Professional Development

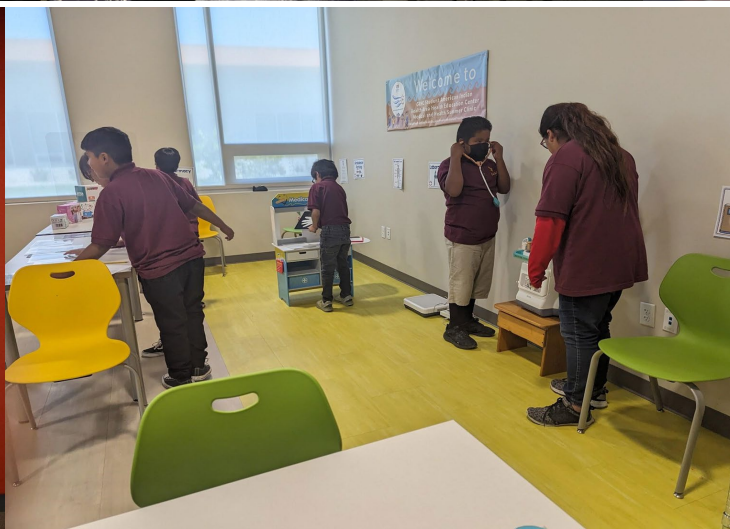
- AIH-AHEC facilitates continuing professional development for current healthcare providers working within Tribal facilities to assist them with staying current in their field in addition to working towards advanced training and certification that enhances their career and the community they serve
- AIH-AHEC supports, strengthens, and increases access to continuing education opportunities for practicing health professionals to enhance quality of care and improve patient outcomes.



Youth Pathway Programs

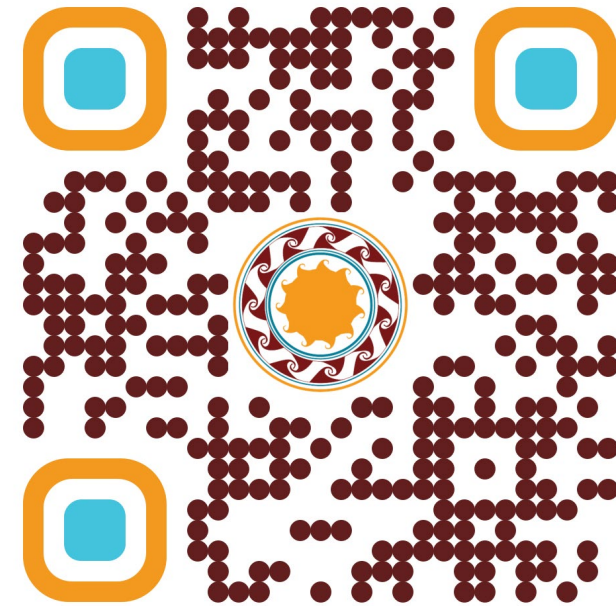
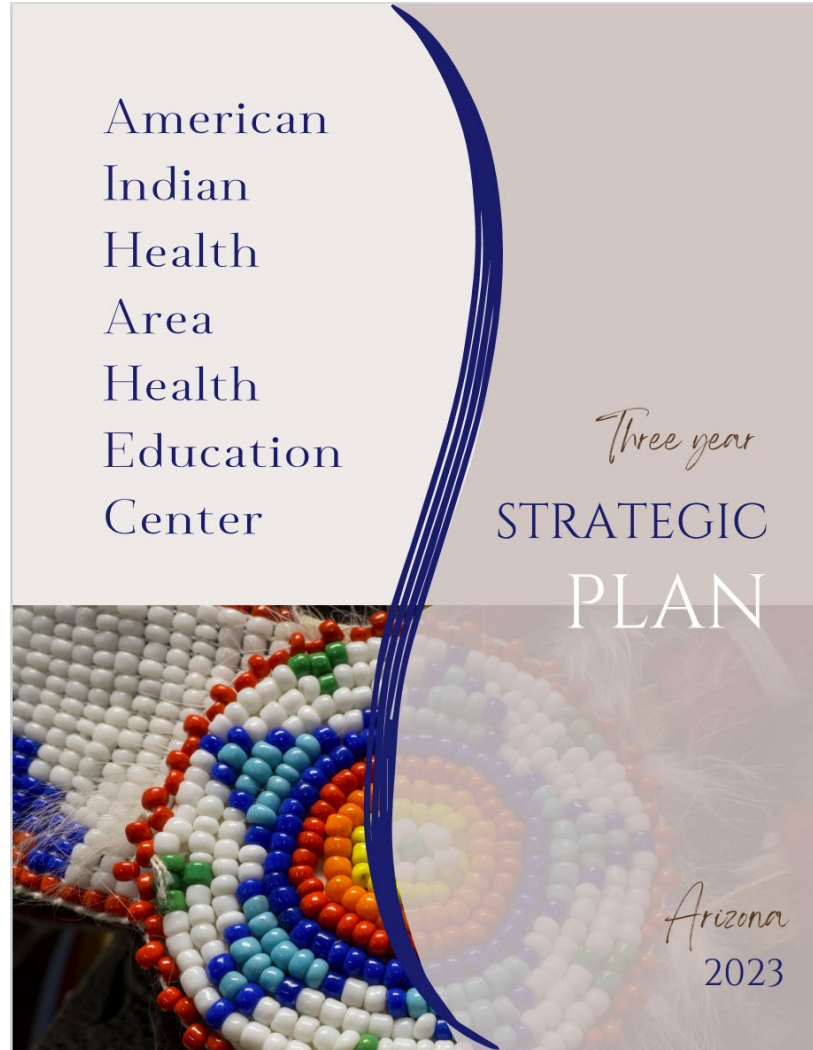
- K – 8th grade activities to introduce youth to healthcare career exploration, field trips and hands-on activities
- 9 – 12th grade activities to introduce high school students to structured health activities and summer healthcare camps, assist with college/technical school placement
- Gila River Health Care’s Summer Scrubs (9-12) and Medical Health Career Education Summer School program (K-6).
- San Carlos Apache Health Care’s Summer Student program (9-12)
- MED-Start program with the University of Arizona’s Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Youth Pathway Events





AIH-AHEC 3 Year Strategic Plan



AIH-AHEC STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

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

The AIH-AHEC implements the **“Growing Our Own”** Strategy throughout its programming and planning



QUESTIONS



Contact Information

Jeff Axtell, Director

Jeffrey.Axtell@aacihc.az.gov

Tashina Machain, Youth Program Coordinator

Tashina.Machain@aacihc.az.gov

Ernestine Nasingoetewa, Professional Development/CEU Coordinator

Ernestine.Nasingoetewa@aacihc.az.gov

Website: <https://aacihc.az.gov/>