



October 30, 2024

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing from the Office of Science Policy (OSP), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) under the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to initiate a Tribal Consultation on “*NIH Disposition of Biospecimens Collected from Tribal Populations*.” After discussion with our Tribal Advisory Committee, NIH has developed a set of options for the disposition of de-identified biospecimens collected from Tribal and International Indigenous population members, including return to Tribes. The goal of this Consultation is to finalize options for disposition of de-identified biospecimens that fully respect Tribal sovereignty and cultural sensitivities, including when transfer/return has been requested by a Tribe.

The virtual Consultation will be held on December 5, 2024 from 11am-1pm EST. Please register at <https://osp.od.nih.gov/events/registration-for-tribal-consultation-on-nih-disposition-of-biospecimens-collected-from-tribal-populations/>. I hope you will be able to participate in this discussion on December 5 and/or provide written testimony (recognized by the use of official Tribal letterhead) by January 20, 2025 to the THRO mailbox at [NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov](mailto:NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov).

NIH is asking for Tribal input regarding options for the disposition of these de-identified biospecimens, to ensure the options finalized for use by Tribes fully respect Tribal sovereignty and cultural sensitivities. The options under consideration, detailed further in the accompanying framing letter, include:

- **Direct transfer/return of de-identified biospecimens to Tribe.** The Tribe will arrange the transfer/return. NIH is poised to assist with transfer/return as needed or requested.
- **Indirect transfer/return of de-identified biospecimens to Tribally designated third-party institution or organization, as identified by Tribe.** The Tribe will arrange the transfer/return. NIH is poised to assist with transfer/return as needed or requested.
- **Indirect transfer/return of de-identified biospecimens to third-party institution or organization identified by NIH in consultation with Tribe and organized by NIH.** NIH will arrange the transfer/return.
- **After consultation with the Tribe, Tribe designates the NIH as the steward for de-identified biospecimens.**
- **After consultation with the Tribe, Tribe requests NIH dispose of de-identified biospecimens in culturally sensitive manner.**

Thank you for your continued partnership and your assistance in helping NIH develop approaches for advancing health in meaningful and respectful ways.

Regards,

Lyric Jorgenson  
Associate Director for Science Policy and  
Director of the Office of Science Policy  
National Institutes of Health