

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-106825](#), a report to congressional committees.

Why GAO Did This Study

Indian Affairs provides services directly to Tribes or funding for tribally administered programs, including support for tribal government operations, law enforcement, natural resource management, and climate preparedness and resilience. GAO has previously reported on lessons learned from Indian Affairs' implementation of major legislation and long-standing challenges with the agency's capacity to manage programs that serve Tribes.

The IRA includes a provision for GAO to oversee distribution and use of IRA funds. This report examines how IRA implementation has affected Indian Affairs' capacity, actions the agency has taken to improve capacity that could help meet IRA workload, and opportunities to improve Indian Affairs' capacity.

GAO reviewed relevant laws, agency documents, and agency data. GAO interviewed federal officials, federal tribal advisory groups, and tribal organizations selected based on knowledge of Indian Affairs' work with Tribes.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Congress, when authorizing funds for Indian Affairs' administrative costs, consider lessons learned from Indian Affairs' use of IRA funds to help determine amounts for future program implementation. GAO is also making six recommendations to Indian Affairs, including that it develops the lessons learned, and a proposal for opportunities to improve capacity and the resources needed to pursue them. Indian Affairs agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-25-106825](#). For more information, contact Anna Maria Ortiz and (202) 512-3841 or OrtizA@gao.gov

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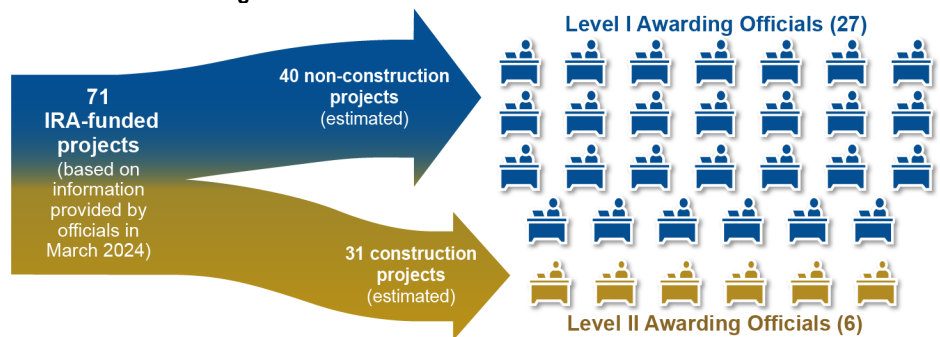
INDIAN AFFAIRS

Additional Actions Needed to Address Long-standing Challenges with Workforce Capacity

What GAO Found

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) provided appropriations of about \$385 million for new and existing programs that serve Tribes and their citizens. This additional funding has increased the workload for Indian Affairs components implementing IRA programs. Indian Affairs officials said that the workload and competing priorities strain the agency's already-limited workforce capacity. For example, new funding streams increased the workload of Awarding Officials, particularly since only six can approve more complex construction projects.

Increase in Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) Workload Across Department of the Interior's Indian Affairs Awarding Officials



Source: GAO review of Department of the Interior's Indian Affairs documents and interviews with agency officials; icons. | GAO-25-106825

Staff in several components implementing the IRA have regularly worked additional hours per pay period to meet workload demands, based on GAO's analysis of workforce data, and most of the components GAO interviewed described significant vacancies.

The IRA appropriated \$9.5 million for administrative costs to implement IRA programs that serve Tribes and their citizens, usable over the entire time period when these appropriations are available. Thus far, Indian Affairs has used these administrative funds—supplemented with baseline appropriations—to hire additional staff and contractors. However, Indian Affairs has not yet documented lessons learned from its use of these funds to meet the increased workload and the impact this had on other mission needs. Documenting this information could help Indian Affairs prepare for future administrative costs. In addition, Congress could use this information to help inform decisions about future appropriations.

Indian Affairs identified opportunities to improve its capacity through, for example, training and streamlining hiring. However, efficiency challenges—such as lack of written guidance for recruitment and burdensome hiring processes—limit its capacity, and officials said that budget uncertainty impedes sustained investment in capacity-building efforts. Indian Affairs has not identified the resources it needs to pursue capacity-building opportunities. Developing a proposal for Department of the Interior or Congress that identifies these needs could help Indian Affairs improve its capacity and capitalize on legislative opportunities to ensure the agency has the resources it needs to effectively provide essential services to Tribes and their citizens.