



2024 Caucus Priorities Report

Intertribal Agriculture Council—The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) was formed by a coalition of federally recognized Tribes in 1987 to fulfill a recommendation in a Congressionally directed report¹ to assess agricultural needs in Indian Country. Since our founding, the IAC has been guided by our member Tribes, and we² have worked diligently to advance Tribes' agricultural priorities on the more than 56 million acres of land in the United States that are under Tribal jurisdiction. In addition to elevating Indian Country's agricultural priorities among policymakers, IAC also provides on-the-ground technical assistance, domestic and international marketing support, natural resource management, small agribusiness development, and more to Tribes and individual producers across the United States and within Indian Country.

The Intertribal Agriculture Council's 2024 caucus priorities reflect a powerful reaffirmation of its original mission—advancing the conservation, development, and use of Tribal agricultural resources through unified Tribal leadership and voice. Informed directly by its membership base, the 2024 priorities address evolving policy, market, and land management concerns while remaining rooted in the foundational charge outlined in IAC's 1993 Articles of Incorporation: to provide a national forum for Tribal producers and Tribal governments to identify mutual concerns, develop federal and Tribal policies, and expand opportunities in Indian agriculture.

This year's priorities mark both continuity and change. While longstanding issues such as land access, resource sovereignty, and Tribal consultation remain central, members have elevated urgent themes like climate adaptation, data sovereignty, and food system resilience. These shifts signal an increasingly future-oriented vision, one that not only safeguards Tribal agricultural traditions but also equips Tribal producers and communities to thrive in a rapidly changing policy and ecological landscape.

Alignment of 2024 Caucus Priorities with IAC's Mission The Intertribal Agriculture Council's 2024 caucus priorities reflect strong alignment with the foundational purposes outlined in the Council's Restated Articles of Incorporation. These priorities, informed directly by our membership via our 12 regional caucus gatherings at the 2024 Annual Conference (Table 1 shows number of caucus priorities submitted, by region), highlight the evolving and urgent needs in Indian agriculture while reinforcing the Council's original charge to serve as a unifying, policy-informed, and capacity-building voice across Indian Country.

¹ 133 Cong. Rec. 25589 (1987) (statement of Sen. Daniel Inouye) ("As a part of that legislation we directed the Bureau to conduct a general survey of agricultural conditions in Indian country throughout the Nation and to file an appropriate report with the Congress. That report . . . among other things, called for establishment of an intertribal agriculture council to review and recommend changes . . . for agricultural and range programs . . ."), <https://www.congress.gov/100/crecb/1987/09/29/GPO-CRECB-1987-pt18-9-2.pdf>

² See 18 U.S. Code § 1151.

Each of the 2024 caucus issues has been mapped to one or more of the following mission-driven themes in our preliminary review:

Economic Development & Market Access: 48 Priorities
Education & Capacity Building: 35 Priorities
Federal/Tribal Policy & Advocacy: 34 Priorities
Sovereignty & Resource Stewardship: 33 Priorities
Communications & Convening: 25 Priorities

Reference Appendix A for evolving mission-driven theme definitions.

Understanding the Breadth of Priorities

The Intertribal Agriculture Council’s (IAC) work is situated across a dynamic spectrum of local, regional, and national priorities—each deeply interconnected and grounded in the unique needs and assets of Tribal producers and Tribal governments. As the IAC continues to advocate for meaningful change, it is increasingly clear that structural responsiveness from federal entities like the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) must be met with sustained and intentional engagement with Tribes themselves.

Whether addressing systemic access barriers at the local service center level or shaping broader programmatic reform through national advocacy, IAC’s priorities reflect a holistic understanding of agriculture as more than a sector—it is a pathway for economic sovereignty, cultural continuity, and intergenerational sustainability. While USDA and BIA remain critical partners, the effectiveness of their programs is ultimately measured by their accessibility and impact in Tribal communities. To that end, IAC continues to emphasize not only the functionality of these agencies but the fundamental necessity of their alignment with Tribal-led visions, governance structures, and local expertise.

- **MAJORITY OF PRIORITIES WILL REQUIRE STREAMLINING BETWEEN BIA & USDA OFFICES**
 - 84.5% of Priorities explicitly named or indicate required engagement with a USDA Agency or Office
 - 19% of Priorities explicitly named or indicate required engagement with a DOI Agency or Office
- **20 LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AGENCIES & OFFICES CITED IN CAUCUS PRIORITIES**
 - USDA-Specific Offices/Agencies: Economic Research Service (1 Priority), Farm Service Agency (20 Priorities), Forest Service (5 Priorities), Risk Management Agency (9 Priority), Agricultural Marketing Service (15 Priorities), Agricultural Research Service (3 Priorities), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (3 Priorities), Food and Nutrition Service (6 Priorities), Food Safety and Inspection Service (7 Priorities), Natural Resources Conservation Service (38 Priorities), Rural Development (11 Priorities), Office Tribal Relations (31 Priorities), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (16 Priorities), Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air, & Rare Plants

Table 1: Total 2024 Priorities, by Regional Caucus

| Total Priorities Raised | 110 |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Alaska Region | 13 |
| Diné Region | 6 |
| Eastern Oklahoma Region | 2 |
| Eastern Region | 9 |
| Great Plains Region | 8 |
| Midwest/Great Lakes Region | 17 |
| Northwest Region | 10 |
| Pacific Region | 11 |
| Rocky Mountain Region | 13 |
| Southern Plains Region | 7 |
| Southwest Region | 8 |

- (1 Priority), Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (3 Priorities), Office of Energy and Environmental Policy (2 Priorities), Office of Contracting and Procurement (1 Priority), Office of Communications (3 Priorities)
- DOI-Specific Offices/Agencies: BIA Realty & Trust Services (19 Priorities), BIA Probate (19 Priorities), BIA Rangeland Management (19 Priorities)
- United States Department of Treasury (1 Priority)
- Tribal-Specific: Tribal Governments (3 Priorities)
- State-Specific Institutions: State Departments of Agriculture (4 Priorities)
- **A UNIFIED VOICE: EXPANDING MEMBERSHIP AND INTERTRIBAL ENGAGEMENT**
 - A growing number of caucus priorities—at least 11 in 2024—call on IAC to expand its role in engaging Tribal members and delegates, highlighting requests for stronger mechanisms to bring new voices into the fold, broaden regional participation, and strengthen channels for Tribal representation. This reinforces IAC’s unique position as the trusted convener of intertribal agricultural leadership across Indian Country.
 - 23 priorities directly align with IAC’s mission to convene and unify Tribal voices, underscoring the need for more structured, accessible, and representative forums—both regionally and nationally—where Tribal producers and Tribal governments can influence policy, share solutions, and coordinate action. These calls affirm that IAC is not just a technical assistance provider, but the central gathering place for shared vision and collective advocacy in Tribal agriculture.

Considerations in Addressing the 2024 Membership Priorities

Strategic Visioning and Organizational Alignment

As the Intertribal Agriculture Council approaches a new era of growth and complexity, we must **align our governing framework**, operations, and visibility with the realities of our national impact. The current language of Article III(c) of the Articles of Incorporation, which identifies the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Billings Office Area as a key liaison, no longer reflects the geographic scale or institutional landscape of IAC’s work. We recommend initiating a review process—grounded in Tribal consultation and strategic foresight—to assess and consider updating this provision. Modernizing our charter presents a timely opportunity to also **re-evaluate our branding** and messaging to better reflect IAC’s evolving role as a convener, advocate, and service provider for Tribal producers across the country.

This foundational reassessment should be paired with a robust, in-person strategic planning process to reimagine IAC’s service delivery model. The 2024 Caucus Priorities underscore persistent structural challenges—from land access to climate resilience and intergenerational knowledge transfer—that require a nimble and future-oriented approach. We recommend convening a national planning session to co-create a **5-, 10-, and 15-year roadmap for the organization**, centered on sustainability, innovation, and community-driven impact.

Policy Engagement and Governance Expansion

Notably, 29 of the 2024 Caucus Priorities were carried over from 2023. This carryover is due in part to Congressional disagreements and delays around reauthorizing the Farm Bill. Both the Senate and House Ag

Committees introduced their own versions of a Farm Bills in the 118th Congress, each of which included a number of new Tribal provisions. The reauthorization delay, coupled with appropriations' delays and a new Administration with different priorities, has stalled the advancement of key Tribal agricultural policies and exposes the limitations of relying upon policy advocacy alone. That is, as a 501(c)(3), IAC is limited in the types of advocacy it can undertake due to lobbying restrictions that accompany IAC's 501(c)(3) status. To address this, we recommend the **formation of a 501(c)(4) associated with IAC**—providing the legal infrastructure to engage in lobbying and direct advocacy that are otherwise significantly restricted by a 501(c)(3) status. A (c)4 entity would amplify IAC's ability to respond swiftly and strategically to both policy threats and opportunities across all levels of government, without risking the robust service-delivery programming offered by IAC as a 501(c)(3).

Community Engagement and Trust-Building

To further strengthen its grassroots foundation, IAC should invest in hosting **4–5 regional gatherings in 2025** that bring our work directly to communities and amplify localized voices in national strategy-setting. These in-person convenings—paired with **monthly remote Member Tribe Roundtables**—will foster sustained engagement and create opportunities for real-time feedback and collaboration. We also encourage the IAC Board to consider establishing a more **public-facing presence** through digital updates, open forums, or leadership briefings. These engagements will enhance transparency, build trust in IAC's leadership, and showcase the dedication and expertise Board members bring to this important work.

Long-Term Sustainability and Legacy Building

Finally, to support this strategic transformation, IAC must prioritize financial sustainability through a diversified revenue strategy. **We recommend launching a bold, 40-year fundraising campaign to commemorate and build upon IAC's legacy—an intergenerational effort that both honors the past and seeds the future of Tribal agriculture.** As part of our rebranding project, we aim to significantly elevate the Intertribal Agriculture Council's (IAC) visibility through a dynamic communications campaign designed to support a fundraising campaign. Key elements of the fundraising strategy include expanding corporate sponsorship initiatives, with a focus on values-aligned partnerships that support Tribal sovereignty and resource stewardship. Additionally, we will grow individual giving through targeted campaigns that engage Tribal producers, alumni of IAC programs, and allies who believe in the transformative potential of our work. By aligning our rebranding and communications strategy with a comprehensive fundraising effort, we can secure the flexible, unrestricted resources needed to innovate, grow, and lead with integrity for decades to come.



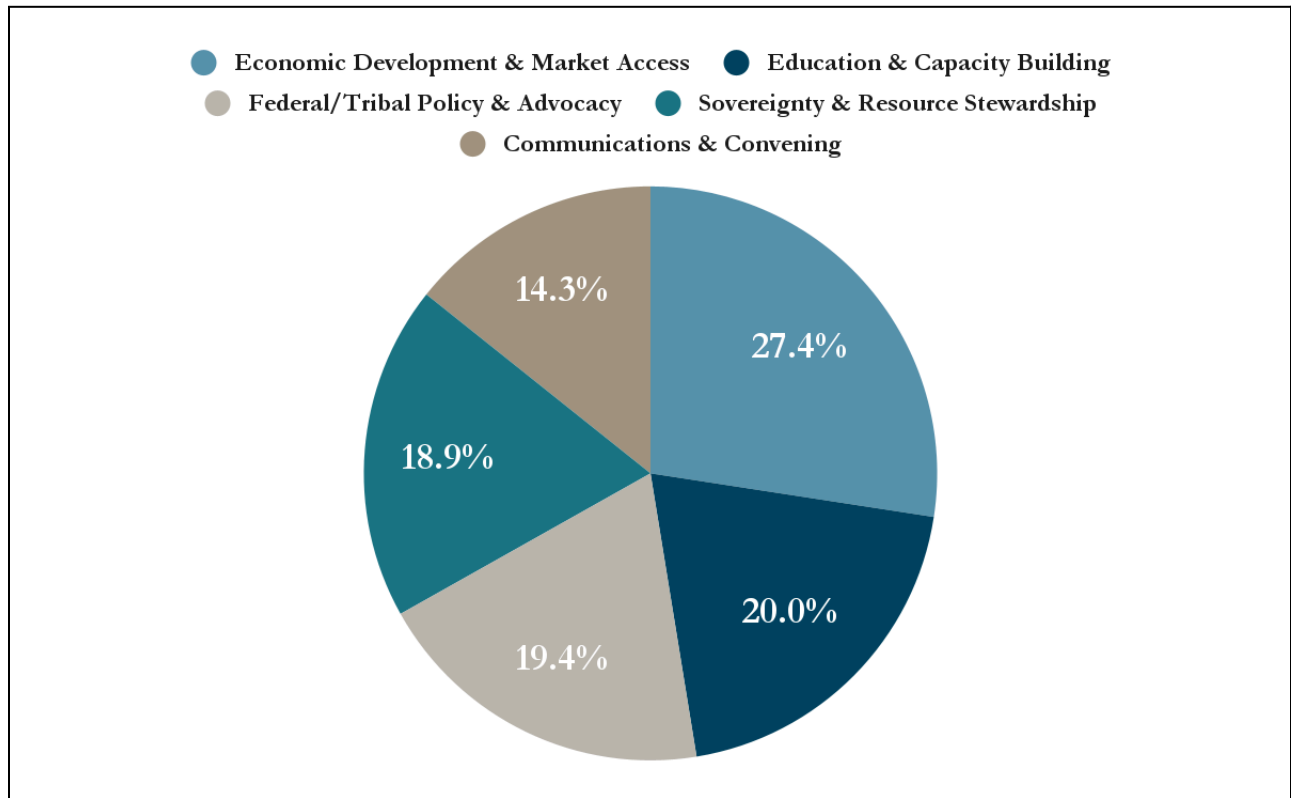
Well-Represented Articles of Incorporation

The following Article III Clauses of IAC's Restated Articles of Incorporation are clearly represented in the caucus mission themes and are directly reflected in multiple 2024 Member-submitted priorities:

| Article III Clause | Theme(s) Represented |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) To pursue and promote the conservation, development and use of the agricultural resources of the Native American Indian and Native Alaskan Tribes. | Sovereignty & Resource Stewardship (33 Priorities) |
| (b) To apply for and obtain federal contracts or grants, grants from other organizations, membership fees, gifts and congressional appropriations to enable the corporation to carry out its purposes and to perform its exempt functions. | Economic Development & Market Access (48 Priorities) |
| (d) To provide a forum for Native American Indian Tribes, Alaskan Native Tribes and Indian and Alaskan Native Producers to realize areas of mutual concern and exchange ideas and information on matters relevant to the management of Indian/Alaskan Native agricultural resources through unified input at the national level. | Communications & Convening (25 Priorities) |
| (e) To assist in the development of federal and tribal policies to improve opportunities for management and increase productivity from Indian/Alaskan Native agricultural resources through unified input at the national level. | Federal/Tribal Policy & Advocacy (34 Priorities) |
| (f) Gather and disseminate information concerning legislative and federal policies affecting Indian/Alaskan Native agricultural interests. | Federal/Tribal Policy & Advocacy (34 Priorities) |
| (g) Advise and work with federal, state, local and tribal governments to develop the full potential benefits attainable to Indian/Alaskan Natives in the agricultural professions and related areas of expertise and use all possible resources available including Tribal Community Colleges. To assist in expanding Indian/Alaskan Native agricultural markets and opportunities. | Education & Capacity Building (35 Priorities), Economic Development & Market Access (48 Priorities) |

APPENDIX A

Mission Driven Themes: Evolving Definitions



Economic Development & Market Access: 48 references

Priorities related to risk mitigation, infrastructure, diversification or valuation, and business growth.

Economic Development & Market Access reflects the IAC’s commitment to expanding economic opportunities for Native producers through improved access to capital, infrastructure, markets, and business development support. This work is authorized under Article III(b) and (g) of the IAC’s Articles of Incorporation, which empower the Council to “apply for and obtain federal contracts or grants... to carry out its purposes” and to assist in “expanding Indian/Alaskan Native agricultural markets and opportunities.”

Education & Capacity Building: 35 references

Priorities centered on workforce development, technical assistance, youth engagement, and Tribal leadership education.

Education & Capacity Building reflects the IAC’s mission to strengthen knowledge, skills, and infrastructure within Tribal communities to support self-sustaining agricultural systems and workforce development. This theme is authorized in Article III(g) of the IAC’s Articles of Incorporation, which empowers the Council to work with Tribal, federal, and educational institutions—including Tribal Colleges—to “develop the full potential benefits attainable to Indian/Alaska Natives in the agricultural professions and related areas of expertise.”

Federal/Tribal Policy & Advocacy: 34 references

Priorities that emphasize Tribal influence in shaping USDA, BIA, and broader federal agricultural policies.

Federal/Tribal Policy & Advocacy represents the IAC's role in shaping and advancing policies that improve Tribal access to and influence over federal agricultural programs and decision-making. This work is rooted in the IAC's Articles of Incorporation, specifically Article III(e) and (f), which authorize the Council "to assist in the development of federal and Tribal policies" and "to gather and disseminate information concerning legislative and federal policies affecting Indian/Alaska Native agricultural interests."

Sovereignty & Resource Stewardship: 33 references

Priorities focused on land access, natural resource management, and the exercise of Tribal self-determination in agricultural development.

Sovereignty & Resource Stewardship reflects the IAC's commitment to supporting Tribal self-determination and sustainable management of Tribal agricultural lands and resources in accordance with cultural values and ecological resilience. This mission theme is grounded in the IAC's Articles of Incorporation, Article III(a) and (d), which authorize the Council "to pursue and promote the conservation, development and use of agricultural resources" and "to provide a forum for Tribes to exchange ideas on resource management through unified national input."

Communications & Convening: 25 references

Priorities calling for more consistent representation, stronger internal communications, and national platforms for Tribal input.

Communications & Convening represents the IAC's role in creating spaces for Tribal producers and Tribal Nations to share knowledge, coordinate strategies, and speak with a unified voice on agricultural issues. This mission theme is grounded in Article III(d) of the IAC's Articles of Incorporation, which authorizes the Council "to provide a forum for Native American Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Tribes and Producers to realize areas of mutual concern and exchange ideas and information... through unified input at the national level."



Please note that these definitions are intended to be collaboratively evolved with our leadership, staff, and membership.