



U.S. DEPARTMENT
of ENERGY | Office of Indian Energy
Policy and Programs

OFFICE OF INDIAN ENERGY

STRATEGIC PLAN

July 2026



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Message from the Director

I am honored to serve as Director of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs (IE) under the Administration of President Donald J. Trump and Secretary of Energy Chris Wright.

Tribal Nations possess extensive energy resources and are poised to share in the prosperity of American energy dominance. At the same time, challenges of reliable and affordable energy and electricity access are acutely felt in Indian Country.

IE partners with Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages and corporations, and Tribal entities by providing financial assistance, technical assistance, and capacity building support for Tribe-led energy projects. IE's work is fundamentally rooted in upholding Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. We recognize each Tribe has a unique energy vision for economic development and community prosperity.

Working alongside our dedicated team, I am proud to lead IE as we build on 20 years of investment to advance affordable, reliable, and secure energy. Together, we are moving with urgency to accelerate progress like never before.

It is a priority for me to strengthen communications with the 575 federally recognized Tribes in the United States. I invite you to learn more about IE through this Strategic Plan, and to reach out to me and my Office about ways we can work together. IE's door is open to all Tribes.

Sincerely,

Eric Mahroum
Director
Office of Indian Energy

Office Overview

IE partners with Indian Tribes and Alaska Native entities to catalyze Tribal energy development, efficiency and use; reduce or stabilize energy costs; enhance and strengthen Tribal energy and economic infrastructure; and expand electric and other energy access to Tribal lands and homes.

Today, IE helps Tribes plan and install energy projects that serve the energy needs of their communities. IE also helps Tribes plan large scale commercial development of Tribal energy resources. IE's role includes providing grant funding, on-demand technical assistance, energy workforce and capacity support, and energy-related information and analysis.

This Strategic Plan outlines ways that IE and Tribal Nations are partnering to advance shared objectives. From this overarching plan, IE will develop annual operating and program plans that provide a foundation for measuring performance and demonstrating results tied to the established goals of the Office. These outcomes will advance DOE's goals for expanding domestic energy production, lowering energy costs and strengthening energy reliability and security.

Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan identifies actions IE is taking to address four critical Indian Energy challenges and advance Administration and Secretarial priorities. The strategy focuses on promoting Tribe-led energy development and affordable, reliable and secure energy in Indian Country. IE's four cross-cutting goals organize the Office's strategic program investments:

- Improve electricity access, costs, and service for Tribal communities
- Grow the Tribal workforce to lead energy initiatives
- Unlock the energy wealth of Tribal nations
- Cut red tape for Tribes developing energy projects.

Through coordination across grant funding, direct technical support, capacity building initiatives, and key partnerships with Tribes and others, IE is working to unleash American energy through approaches grounded in Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. The strategy provides a focused framework for action and measurable performance outcomes.



DOE Staff at the 2026 Reservation Economic Summit

From left to right: IE Strategic Initiatives Manager and Acting External Affairs Manager Katrina Pielli; DOE Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear (GAIN) Community and Tribal Engagement Manager Emily Nichols; DOE Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation Physical Scientist Emily Brooks; IE Permitting and Tribal Affairs Specialist Elisah VandenBussche; IE Tribal Energy Navigator Sandy Pagan; IE Tribal Affairs Specialist Dr. Tommy Jones; DOE Office of Energy Dominance Financing Senior Consultants Paul Dearhouse and Sebastian Jono.

Challenges

Four critical Indian Energy challenges:

1. Systemic energy insecurity on Tribal lands
2. Inadequate staffing and technical capacity to lead Tribal energy initiatives
3. Unrealized potential of Tribal energy resource wealth
4. Administrative and regulatory barriers to energy project development

Mission and Core Values

Mission

IE's core mission is its authorizing statute under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. To:

- PROMOTE Tribal energy development, efficiency, and use
- REDUCE or STABILIZE energy costs
- ENHANCE and STRENGTHEN Tribal energy and economic infrastructure
- ELECTRIFY Indian lands and homes

Core Values

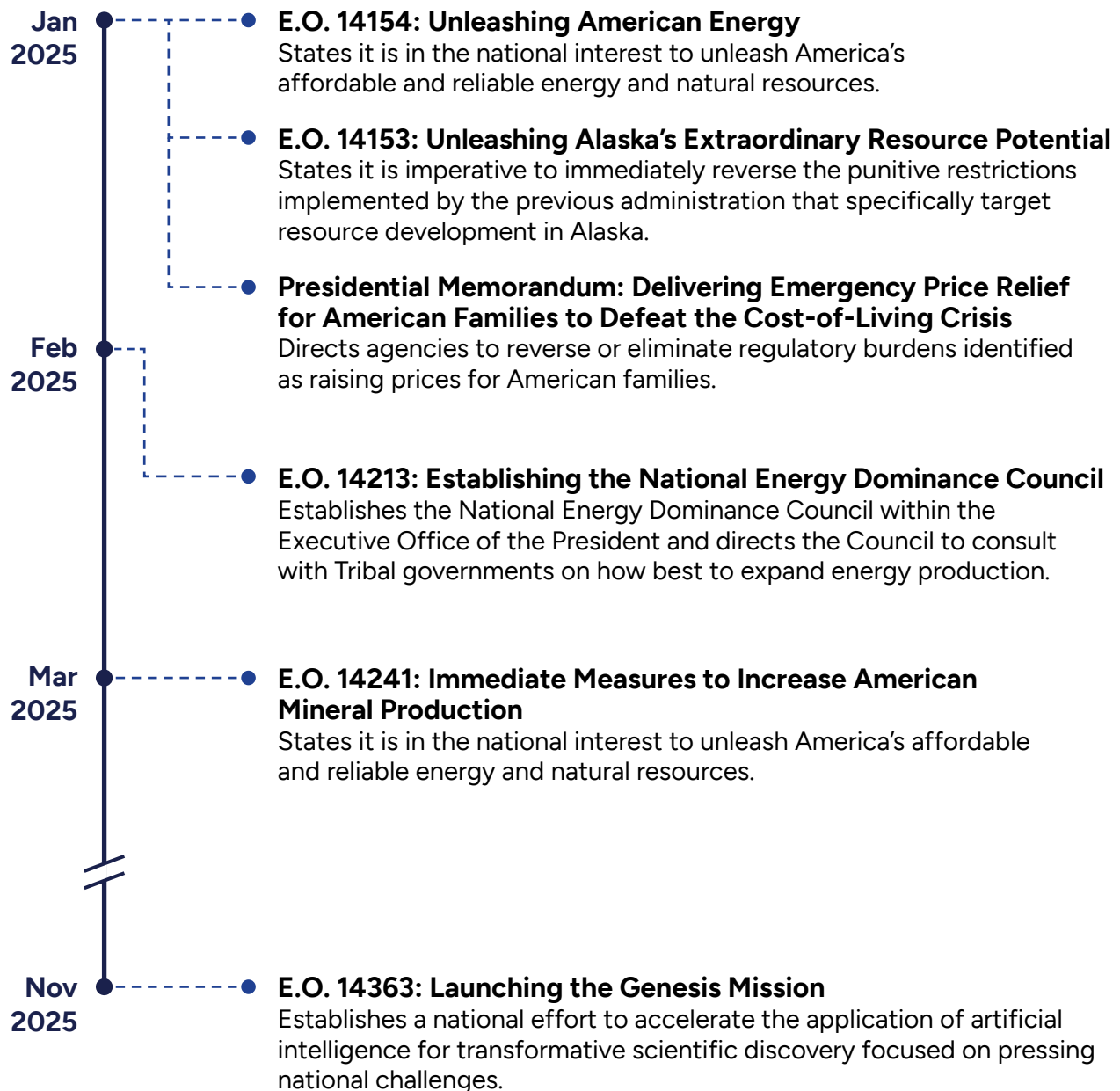
Sovereignty. Federally recognized Tribes are sovereign nations, and the U.S. government has a government-to-government relationship with Tribes.

Self-Determination. IE carries out its work in accordance with the long-standing principle of Tribal self-determination, first codified in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. This principle, simply put, tells us that Tribes know best how to implement the programs and projects intended to benefit their citizens.

Alignment With Administration and Departmental Priorities

President Trump issued a series of Executive Orders (EO) which systematically reduce regulatory barriers to unleash the full potential of Tribal energy, minerals, and technological innovation.

Administration Priorities



U.S. Secretary of Energy Priorities

U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright signed a Secretarial Order on February 5, 2025, directing DOE to take immediate action to unleash American energy in accordance with President Trump's Executive Orders. IE's actions align with the following Secretarial priorities:

- **Advance energy addition, not subtraction:** The Department's goal is to unleash the great abundance of American energy required to power modern life and to achieve a durable state of American energy dominance.
- **Unleash American energy innovation:** The Department will prioritize affordable, reliable, and secure energy technologies, including fossil fuels, advanced nuclear, geothermal, and hydropower, as well as true technological breakthroughs.
- **Strengthen grid reliability and security:** The Department will bring a renewed focus to growing baseload and dispatchable generation to reliably meet growing demand.
- **Streamline permitting and identify undue burdens on American energy:** The Department will prioritize more efficient permitting to enable private sector investments and build the energy infrastructure needed to make energy more affordable, reliable, and secure.



“A highly energized society can bring health, wealth, and opportunity for all.”

– U.S. Energy Secretary
Chris Wright

IE Leadership Priorities

Director Eric Mahroum established four strategic Office priorities aligned with the Administration and Secretarial priorities described above. They are:

Affordability



- Accelerate progress on new energy projects to deliver affordable, reliable, and secure energy to Tribal communities, particularly in rural and remote locations with disproportionately high energy costs
- Eliminate the decades-long electricity access gap in Indian Country

Public-Private Partnerships



- Unlock significant American energy across Indian Country by fostering new partnership opportunities for Tribes in the energy sector
- Expand economic opportunity by delivering assistance to Tribes that create effective business environments for energy sector commerce both on and off Tribal lands

Communications



- Strengthen outreach and communications with all Tribes to effectively share resources that enable Tribal energy sovereignty and effective two-way engagement
- Create high-quality engagement forums that highlight Tribes' successes, the administration's priorities, and provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities

Workforce



- Advance Tribal-led energy initiatives through the creation of a formula funding program proposal to increase Tribal government capacity
- Build the pipeline for the next generation of Tribal energy leaders through energy sector jobs and training

Overarching Framework

IE advances Tribal energy sovereignty by translating federal priorities and congressional mandates into targeted actions. The overarching framework pursues four goals, executed across the Office.

IE's goals:

- Improve electricity access, costs, and service for Tribal communities
- Grow the Tribal workforce to lead energy initiatives
- Unlock the energy wealth of Tribal nations
- Cut red tape for Tribes developing energy projects

Together, these goals reflect a deliberate shift toward increasing energy development while also strengthening Tribal control, capacity, and long-term economic benefits. IE aims to meet the following measurable outcomes by 2030:

Energy cost savings: Cumulative energy cost savings to funded Tribal communities over the life of the installed generation systems of more than \$2 billion.

Generation capacity: Installation of 100 megawatts of cumulative new generation capacity in Indian Country.

Project development assistance: Support 450 Tribe-led energy and economic infrastructure development projects.

This framework establishes a clear line of sight from goals to outcomes and ensures IE's work results in tangible improvements for Indian Tribes.

The Unique Circumstances of Alaska

Approximately half of federally recognized Tribes are in Alaska. Alaska presents its own unique opportunities and challenges. Due to its harsh climate, remoteness, and historic laws like the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), Alaska stands distinct from the reservation system in the 48 contiguous United States. To account for the unique circumstances of Alaska, IE works closely with key partners such as the Denali Commission, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, and the National Laboratory of the Rockies' Alaska Campus, focused on extreme environments, to ensure remote communities have access to the full suite of Tribal and programmatic resources of DOE, including technical experts who have deep local knowledge.



Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Improve Electricity Access, Costs, and Service for Tribal Communities

Excluded from historical rural electrification efforts, an estimated 17,000 to 23,000 Tribal households still lack power today. Those with access face disproportionate costs: the average Tribal energy burden is 28.3% higher than the U.S. median of 3%, with some paying well over 4 times the national average, and many—especially in Alaska—enduring a severe burden exceeding 10% of their income. Compounding these high costs is severe unreliability, with Tribal communities experiencing 6.5 times more annual outages than the national average, climbing to 7.75 times in Alaska Native Villages. These systemic challenges of access, cost, and reliability are exacerbated by high poverty, poor housing quality, and remote locations.

Objectives

- 1.1 Eliminate the electricity access gap
- 1.2 Reduce or stabilize energy costs
- 1.3 Enhance and strengthen energy infrastructure

Realizing the Goal

- **Provide grant funding for the construction of energy assets** through IE's Financial Assistance Program that serves the electric loads of Tribal communities, including energy generation, storage, delivery, and efficiency.
- Develop a **National Framework for Tribal Electricity Access** to map the quantity and location of unelectrified homes, coordinate interagency resources, engage private sector partners, and identify implementation methods to electrify Indian lands.
- **Support the formation of Tribal Utility Authorities** through IE's Technical Assistance Program to increase energy security and reliability and lower energy costs.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 2. Grow the Tribal Workforce To Lead Energy Initiatives

A consistent barrier for Tribe-led energy project development is insufficient staff and technical capacity. Workforce development and capacity building within Tribal governments, enterprises, and other Tribal organizations are critical inputs to unleashing Tribal energy resources.

Objectives

- 2.1 Support skills and training in alignment with job opportunities and industry needs
- 2.2 Expand access to energy career opportunities
- 2.3 Fund Tribal energy staff to oversee projects and obtain professional development

Realizing the Goal

- Support Tribal Colleges and Universities developing hands-on training and credentialing programs to produce natural gas, oil, coal, and geothermal energy through the **Partnerships for Academic-Industry Career Training (PACT) Initiative**, led by DOE's Hydrocarbons and Geothermal Energy Office.
- Fund fellowships for recent graduates and early-career professionals with Tribal host institutions to execute projects that improve energy infrastructure and make the U.S. power system more reliable, affordable, and resilient through the DOE **Energy Innovator Fellows Program**.
- **Provide grant funding for energy project management**, workforce training, and skill development through IE's Financial Assistance Program.

Indian Country Energy and Infrastructure Working Group (ICEIWG)

ICEIWG is an intergovernmental committee established in 2011 to bring government and Tribal leaders together and is managed as a program initiative of IE. The purpose of the Working Group is to provide advice and recommendations to the Director of IE and the Secretary of Energy with respect to the strategic planning and implementation of IE's programs and initiatives, with a particular focus on advancing American energy independence and maximizing the responsible development of Tribal energy resources. For more information, see [Indian Country Energy and Infrastructure Working Group | Department of Energy](#)



Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 3. Unlock the Energy Wealth of Tribal Nations

Indian Country contains vast underdeveloped energy resources. Significant potential exists for Tribal Nations to participate in the broader energy economy and contribute to American energy dominance.

Objectives

- 3.1 Make the full array of DOE's technical and scientific resources available to Tribes
- 3.2 De-risk large-scale project development planning toward investment readiness
- 3.3 Foster new partnership opportunities between Tribes and the private sector

Realizing the Goal

- **Expand IE's Technical Assistance program with DOE's national laboratories, the Denali Commission, and other partners** to scale up support for early-stage Tribal energy development planning, broadening the range of services and subject matter expertise available at no cost to Tribes.
- **Provide grant funding for planning, assessment, and feasibility activities for large-scale commercial development of Tribal energy resources** for Tribal revenue generation and economic development. This includes planning for projects that may need financing in later phases, such as through direct loans and loan guarantees under DOE's Office of Energy Dominance Financing Tribal Energy Financing Program.
- Develop and execute Exploration Challenges in priority technology areas, beginning with the **Tribal Data Center Exploration Challenge**. Challenges will provide cohort-based technical support and peer learning opportunities for Tribes exploring high-dollar, high-impact projects. By leveraging DOE's convening power and connections with the private sector, IE will use this structure to foster new connections between Tribes and the private sector.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 4. Cut Red Tape for Tribes Developing Energy Projects

Tribes seeking to develop energy projects on their land navigate up to a dozen federal agencies and many more individual federal permitting requirements. These same federal agencies often seek valuable input from Tribal staff during development of non-Tribal projects on or near Tribal land. Similarly, when seeking funding, Tribes must track dozens of sources of potential funding, including deadlines and requirements. Streamlining these burdensome processes would free up Tribal staff capacity for more effective energy development.

Objectives

- 4.1 Simplify navigation of federal resources and funding opportunities for Tribes
- 4.2 Support Tribal self-determination in navigation of federal permitting for Tribal projects
- 4.3 Streamline DOE engagement with Tribes during permitting processes

Realizing the Goal

- Provide Tribes with quick-turnaround, actionable, and bespoke support in identifying potential resources and funding opportunities that may help advance their goals through IE's **Tribal Energy Navigator program**. These resources are tracked across federal, state, philanthropic, nonprofit, and other sources.
- Develop an **artificial intelligence-driven navigation tool that Tribes can use to identify and track the relevant federal permitting application processes** for an energy project, including user-friendly interactive tools to simplify navigation of complex processes. The tool will be designed to interface with CEQ's Permitting Innovation Center to ensure interoperability across agencies and with continuing permitting modernization efforts across the Administration.
- Support DOE offices in Tribal engagement as it relates to permitting processes for high-impact, high-dollar projects through an internal **DOE Permitting Tribal Engagement Working Group**. The working group will provide resources to reduce duplicate efforts across DOE, encourage coordination across offices, and identify key opportunities to improve efficiency in DOE permitting and environmental review processes.



Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Biomass District Heating System (Minnesota) installed a biomass district heating system for its Brookston Community Center, adding 3 MMBtu per hour of energy/ heating capacity. The system is projected to save approximately \$31,000 annually. They celebrated with a ribbon cutting in June 2025.

Photo by Josh Gregory / DOE

Key Statutory Authorities

Enacted Law	What It Enables
Public Law 109-58 – Energy Policy Act of 2005, including the Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005 (Section 502 and 503)	• Established IE as an Office within DOE and established the duties of the Director (see Mission) by amending the Dept. of Energy Organization Act • Authorized IE to grant competitive financial assistance to Indian Tribes and Tribal Energy Resource Development Organizations (later modified to TEDOs) • Authorized IE to establish a formula grant program for Tribes • Authorized the federal government to give preference to Tribal majority owned businesses when procuring energy, energy products, and energy byproducts for federal use
Public Law 115-325 – Indian Tribal Energy and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2017	• Expanded eligibility for IE's financial assistance to include intertribal organizations • Explicitly allowed grants to be used to increase the capacity of Tribes to manage energy programs • Made DOE technical and scientific resources more available for Tribal energy activities and projects • Changed "Tribal Energy Resource Development Organizations" to be "Tribal Energy Development Organizations (TEDO)" and allowed any Tribally owned enterprise which is developing energy resources to qualify as a TEDO
Public Law 116-260 – Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, including the Energy Act of 2020 (Section 8013)	• Allowed the Secretary of Energy to reduce any required cost share for grants from 50% to 10% • Expanded the definition of Indian Land to include census tracts with majority Alaska Native population, and land conveyed to Alaska Native Corporations.

Conclusion

The Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs (IE) Strategic Plan represents a direct response to the urgent energy challenges and opportunities facing Tribal nations and the United States, recognizing that affordable, reliable, and secure energy is essential for long-term economic growth, energy independence, and resilience across Indian Country.

This plan and its core values guide IE with a clear vision of Tribal energy leadership, self-determination and sovereignty. Every action will be executed with urgency, transparency, and a deep respect for the principle that Tribes know best how to serve their citizens.

The plan fosters a culture of innovation, collaboration, and data-driven decision-making, leveraging the expertise of national laboratories, industry partners, and most importantly, Indian Tribes.

The strategic goals outlined within this document—from eliminating the electricity access gap and growing a skilled Tribal workforce to unlocking vast untapped energy resources and cutting regulatory red tape—are complex and shaped by broader challenges that exist in Indian Country. Successful execution of these goals will be achieved by consistent and predictable support from IE over time, ensuring that Tribal communities reach their energy goals and contribute significantly to broader American energy dominance.

We recognize that the challenges are significant, but we are confident that through genuine partnerships with Tribal nations, IE will deliver on its promise to help Tribal communities flourish for generations to come.



Igiugig, AK installed its second RivGen hydrokinetic power system integrated into an existing diesel power plant with support from the Office of Indian Energy. Relying on the river's flow, the system provides baseload power for consistent and reliable generation, increasing energy security and reducing costs for this Alaska Native Village. *Photo from ORPC*



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