



BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2015

Background

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), formerly known as the Office of Indian Education Programs, is housed within the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) reporting to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs. The BIE supports educational programs and residential facilities for American Indian and Alaska Native students from federally recognized tribes at 183 elementary and secondary schools and dormitories, located on 64 reservations in 23 states, serving over 48,000 students. Of these schools and dormitories, 54 are BIE-operated and 129 are tribally operated under BIE contracts or grants.

The BIE also provides support to American Indian and Alaska Native post-secondary students through higher education scholarships and funding for 28 tribal colleges and universities across the U.S. serving over 25,000 students and two tribal technical colleges. The BIE directly funds two post-secondary institutions: the Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The BIE also has the responsibilities of a state educational agency for purposes of administering federal grant programs for education. The BIE provides instruction that is aligned to the applicable state academic standards set forth in the regulations, works with the U.S. Department of Education to administer education grants, and provides oversight and accountability for schools and students success. BIE is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), among other education related federal laws throughout its school system.

Overview of BIE Communications

In its September 2013 report, the Government Accountability Office found that organizations within Indian Affairs do not coordinate effectively due to poor communication. The report recommended that Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education adopt a more balanced organizational approach to include shared responsibility, new policies and procedures, and improved communication.

In response, BIE has developed a communications plan as part of the 2014-2018 BIE Strategic Plan to shape the organization's alignment with BIE's vision and communications goals. The BIE communications plan incorporates recommendations from numerous stakeholders including the U.S. Department of Education and DOI's American Indian Education Study Group, tribes, Indian Affairs and DOI senior management. This inclusive approach, which engaged all key stakeholders throughout its development process, provided the framework for a comprehensive plan that focuses on two-way communication based on transparency, collaboration, and consistency.

The main priority of the BIE communication plan is to regularly inform its schools and key stakeholders of critical developments and key information that impacts instruction and the operation of their schools. Additional priorities outlined in the communications plan emphasize student, teacher, and principal accomplishments, recognition, and ensure the utilization of pre-set communication agendas for all stakeholder activities.

The BIE has embedded its communications plan into the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan as part of its overall effort to ensure new initiatives receive full input through collaborative partnerships and to revitalize support and interest in the BIE, and promote key priorities and strategies. This communications plan ensures the success of the BIE Strategic Plan with its overarching goal of providing outstanding educational opportunities for American Indian and Alaska Native students, engaging stakeholders, and shaping the implementation of the strategic plan.

Key Stakeholders

The following stakeholders have been identified as critical players to effectively execute BIE strategies and initiatives:

- **American Indian and Alaska Native Students:** American Indian and Alaska Native students are BIE's primary cohort. The BIE's responsibility is to ensure that all students are given every advantage and opportunity to be successful.
- **Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs (Management) (DASM), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA):** The BIE is housed within the DOI and must work in collaboration with the AS-IA and his/her offices, the DASM, and the BIA to collectively address Indian education. Collaboration and alignment of these groups is essential to developing policy and legislation on issues impacting all BIE-funded schools, maximizing resources and implementing strategic plans.
- **Tribes:** Tribal partnerships are integral to the continued support of the government-to-government relationship between tribes, and DOI and BIE.
- **Associate Deputy Directors:** BIE works extensively with its Associate Deputy Directors (ADDs) to ensure the needs of their three regions are met in executing policies, managing grants and fulfilling the academic needs of BIE-operated and tribally controlled schools.
- **Principals:** BIE-operated and tribally controlled schools rely on principals to manage and serve as instructional leaders at each school site.

Target Audience

The BIE has identified internal and external target audiences to ensure proper messaging and communication. The **internal** audience includes parties responsible for the day-to-day operation of BIE schools. These audiences include:

- BIE employees
- BIE Central office staff
- BIE Field office staff at all levels
- Superintendents/Principals
- Teachers
- Other School Staff

Important **external** audiences are those who can influence or support the mission and goals of the BIE. These audiences are listed below:

- American Indian and Alaska Native students
- Parents/guardians and elders
- Tribal leadership
- BIE-operated school boards
- BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Education
- Tribal school staff
- Tribal education departments
- Tribal school boards
- Tribal college presidents
- American Indian and Alaska Native based community organizations
- National education and Indian organizations
- Other federal, state, regulatory agencies
- Tribal, local and national media
- Policy makers (local, state, tribal and federal)/Legislators?

Communications Actions: Key Elements of the Plan

Message Development

BIE has identified the need for message development to deliver concise, strategic messages that are relevant to each identified stakeholder and adapted for their unique target audience. BIE will craft compelling and engaging messages that are succinct with the BIE's vision and goals. These messages will convey meaningful information to be delivered through a range of channels including internal communication, community outreach, public affairs, and print or electronic materials.

BIE Website

BIE plans a complete revision of the BIE website (www.bie.edu) to improve accessibility and readability that will include the most up-to-date, content rich information regarding BIE policies and strategies, news, training and technical assistance announcements, schedules, downloadable resources, and a searchable BIE directory and resource library. Upon clearance, the new BIE website will serve as a resource center for BIE and the general public.

BIE Directory

The BIE National Directory serves as a reference for the public to access contact information (name, title, mailing address, phone, email and fax) for BIE schools, central office, ADDs, proposed educational resource centers, schools, boarding schools, residential halls, post-secondary institutions, as well as BIA Facilities Managers under the Division of Facilities Management and Construction, and regional contacts for the Office of Facilities, Safety, Property, and Environmental. The current BIE National Directory, updated July 25, 2015, is

available in PDF format and downloadable from the BIE website at the following web address: <http://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/document/idc1-031069.pdf>. The BIE has also developed a fully searchable, electronic map of the 183 BIE schools with their grade level, school type, and physical address on the BIE website homepage and schools webpage: <http://batchgeo.com/map/9f6549da718aaafb3002cac82579d29e>.

Social Media Engagement

BIE will expand on existing social media channels on their official Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages. BIE's social media sites are intended to reach a range of stakeholders from students, parents, employees, tribal leaders, community organizations, and the general public. Efforts to improve BIE social media sites will include developing and managing content for posts that provide subscribers with the most up-to-date information on BIE news, policies, activities and stories from BIE-operated and tribally controlled schools and post-secondary institutions. BIE will also focus on encouraging stakeholders, schools, communities and individuals to use BIE social media channels and tools to engage individuals, promote communication and information sharing, and advance BIE goals. Additional activities may include social media training from BIE communications staff that provides stakeholders with the resources and tools to enhance safe social media engagement.

Listserv Development and Maintenance

The BIE will develop and maintain several listservs for BIE-operated and tribally controlled schools, education line offices, and divisions as well as partner divisions within the DOI to disseminate targeted information to the appropriate staff members. The purpose of these listservs is to ensure that all BIE employees receive relevant information on their roles and responsibilities and timely information associated with their school, office or division. BIE uses Constant Contact Software for managing its lists and delivering information via email such as training, webinars, resources, policy updates, events, and staff directories.

Currently, BIE has developed listservs for all BIE staff and tribally controlled school staff interested in receiving regular email updates on facilities, maintenance, construction, safety and risk management, environmental, and finance. BIE has established a process for developing and sending email blasts that ensures messages are error-free and are delivered to the appropriate listserv. The BIE listservs will be updated on a quarterly basis.

Electronic Newsletter

BIE will research, prepare and distribute a bimonthly BIE electronic newsletter (e-newsletter). Each edition of the BIE e-newsletter will focus on updates from the BIE Director's office, information on key policies and BIE initiatives, spotlight articles on BIE schools, BIE-related grant and funding announcements, as well as education resources, event announcements and relevant training and technical assistance information, opportunities for BIE schools and staff, and regular articles from partner divisions within DOI that serve BIE, such as the Division of Facilities, Management and Construction and the Division of Safety and Risk Management. The newsletter will be emailed on a bimonthly basis to all internal stakeholders.

Materials Development

BIE will develop a series of outreach materials based on content derived from the message development process for various education needs (i.e., teacher or student recruitment, events, webinars, etc.). Promotional items with updated graphic artwork will be designed to boost engagement and support and increase public awareness of BIE's vision, goals, initiatives and reform. Promotional items may include talking points, communication templates and toolkits for BIE-wide use or and/or customized items for schools and tribes to use to accompany publications, promotions and outreach campaigns as well as an interactive electronic and print map displaying BIE schools, dormitories and post-secondary institutions.

Conduct Conference Calls

BIE will prepare and deliver weekly and monthly conference calls with customized and regionally tailored content on BIE activities, plan alignment, initiatives and communication topics useful to BIE schools and their work. BIE will conduct a series of weekly calls with Regional Associate Deputy Directors (ADDs), Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA), and the Deputy Director of School Operations, and will hold monthly calls with key BIE stakeholders to provide ongoing two-way communication and discuss secretarial orders, strategic plan follow-up, provide updates on the implementation of the *Blueprint for Reform*, and share regional accomplishments.

Webinar Series

The BIE will host weekly webinars for key stakeholders (regional ADDs, DPA, principals, tribal education department directors, and tribal leadership). The goal of these hour-long sessions will be tailored by regional audience and focus on a range of technical assistance topics including reform, transition, planning, communication, and outreach. These webinars will also serve as a forum for sharing successful practices and accomplishments among tribes, BIE schools and BIE staff. The completed webinars are archived and uploaded to the BIE website at the following site: www.bie.edu/Resources/webinar/index.htm for convenient online viewing.

Public Affairs

BIE will have an integrated and cohesive communication strategy to help communicate and shape the conversation around improved education in BIE schools. BIE will work in conjunction with the DOI Communications office and Indian Affairs Public Affairs office to prepare press releases, news releases, media advisories, general publications and audio-visual materials, and other written material to creatively communicate and interface with the public and internal entities about information, services, programs, etc., in schools and communities. Specifically, BIE will conduct outreach that guarantees the *Blueprint for Reform's* concepts and goals are fully understood by tribes and schools.

Special Events

BIE will plan and coordinate special events such as news conferences, ceremonies, receptions, photo opportunities, Secretarial and BIE Director school visits, Congressional and White House

school visits, and other functions that the media is encouraged to attend. BIE will coordinate and work with the DOI Communications Office and the Indian Affairs Public Affairs Office and other agency personnel as necessary. BIE communications staff will arrange and coordinate the physical and logistical arrangements, prepare informational materials and inform media outlets and others of the events.

Implementing the Communications Plan

Activity	Purpose	Audience	Action	Timeline	Leadership
Message Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver strategic messages tailored for key stakeholders and target audiences on the BIE's mission, vision, goals and reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS-IA/DASM/BIA ADDs/DPA/DDSO BIE principals Tribal college presidents Tribal education department directors Tribal leaders Educators Policy makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather feedback and recommendations from BIE senior managers and field staff. Draft talking points and other messages for BIE staff and tribal leaders to deliver to schools and communities. 	Ongoing	BIE Central Staff
BIE Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as information portal for BIE schools. Improve accessibility to BIE information, policies, news, activities, and reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs/DASM/BIA ADDs/DPA/DDSO BIE principals Tribal college presidents Tribal education department directors Tribal leaders Educators Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to revise existing content and gather new information for website. Coordinate with DOI IT team to develop and strategy and timeline for revisions. 	Ongoing 1 st revision to be completed 8/1/15	BIE Central Office Staff, DOI IT/Communications Office
BIE Directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update 2011 BIE Directory with up-to-date contact information and new organizational structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS-IA/DASM/BIA ADDs/DPA/DDSO BIE principals Tribal college presidents Tribal education department directors Tribal leaders Educators Policy makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin contacting BIE regional offices, Education Line Offices, schools, residential halls and post-secondary institutions for updated information. Coordinate with DOI IT to create a searchable electronic directory. 	Completed Published 5/1/15 Updated on 5/25/15 to reflect end-of-school year staffing changes	BIE Central Office Staff, DOI IT/Communications Office
Social Media Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing, timely BIE-related news, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS-IA/DASM/BIA ADDs/DPA/DDSO BIE principals Tribal college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and develop content for consistent and timely posts 	Ongoing	BIE Central Office Staff

Activity	Purpose	Audience	Action	Timeline	Leadership
	photos, and resources to connect internal stakeholders, partners, and general public.	presidents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal education department directors ▪ Tribal leaders ▪ Educators ▪ Policy makers 	on BIE Facebook and Twitter sites.		
Listserv Development and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver relevant information and resources to target audiences within BIE. ▪ Maintain an up-to-date database of email contacts from all BIE-funded school staff, BIE divisions and other DOI divisions that serve BIE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AS-IA/DASM/BIA ▪ ADDs/DPA/DDSO ▪ BIE principals ▪ BIE staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and maintain an email database of contacts to communicate information based on area of work and interest. ▪ Coordinate with BIE and BIA staff to deliver timely and relevant information to proper listserv. 	Ongoing Update contacts quarterly	BIE Central Office Staff, BIA
E-Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlight program activities, initiatives, funding opportunities, training and events. ▪ Share school success stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ADDs/DPA/DDSO ▪ BIE principals ▪ Tribal college presidents ▪ Tribal education department directors ▪ Tribal leaders ▪ Educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop content ▪ Coordinate with ADDs and regional staff to highlight regional activities and stories. 	Biweekly Issues delivered: 3/16/15 3/30/15 4/14/15 4/28/15 5/18/15 6/2/15 6/22/15 7/27/15 8/14/15 9/01/15	BIE Central Office Staff
Materials Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide ADDs, regional staff, BIE schools with print resources to communicate BIE vision, goals and reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ADDs/DPA/DDSO ▪ BIE principals ▪ Tribal college presidents ▪ Tribal education department directors ▪ Tribal leaders ▪ Educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create talking points and other outreach materials to be determined by senior managers. 	Ongoing	BIE Central Office Staff
Conference Calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share accomplishments and critical needs ▪ Conduct Monthly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ADDs ▪ BIE Principals ▪ Tribal college presidents ▪ Tribal education department directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine call topics and agendas. ▪ Confirm schedules. ▪ Conduct monthly 	ADD, DPA, Senior Leadership calls held weekly.	BIE Central Office Staff

Activity	Purpose	Audience	Action	Timeline	Leadership
	Stakeholder calls with BIE leadership and public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tribal leaders ▪ Educators ▪ Policy makers ▪ Parents ▪ Public 	stakeholder calls for public.	Monthly stakeholder calls held on: 4/7/15 5/5/15 6/9/15 7/7/15 8/4/15 9/1/15	
Webinar Series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share accomplishments and critical needs. • Provide training and technical assistance. • Present ongoing BIE organizational updates, changes, and activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ADDs ▪ BIE Principals ▪ Tribal education departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine webinar topics and agenda. ▪ Set schedules. 	Weekly Webinars held on: 3/12/15 3/19/15 3/26/15 4/16/15 5/6/15 5/18/15 5/21/15 5/28/15 6/25/15 7/23/15 7/30/15 8/7/15 9/3/15 9/10/19	BIE Central Office Staff
Public Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate vision, goals and activities aligned with strategic plan and reorganization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AS-IA/DASM/BIA ▪ ADDs/DPA/DDSO ▪ BIE principals ▪ Tribal college presidents ▪ Tribal education department directors ▪ Tribal leaders ▪ Educators ▪ Policy makers ▪ General public ▪ Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor and develop content and public relations materials. ▪ Maintain open communication with internal and external partners. ▪ Collaborate with DOI Communications office and Indian Affairs Public Affairs. 	Ongoing	DOI Communications Office, Indian Affairs Public Affairs Office, and BIE Central Staff
Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlight program events and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AS-IA/DASM/BIA ▪ ADDs/DPA/DDSO ▪ BIE principals ▪ Tribal college presidents ▪ Tribal education department directors ▪ Tribal leaders ▪ Educators ▪ Policy makers ▪ General public ▪ Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate with DOI Communications Office and Indian Affairs Public affairs throughout planning and promotion process. 	Ongoing	DOI Communications Office, Indian Affairs Public Affairs Office, and BIE Central Staff

