

NIGC Draft Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Consultation Transcript
Moderator: Jonodev Chaudhuri
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12:00 pm CT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen only mode. During the question and answer session of today's call, you may press star followed by 1 to ask a question.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. And now I'll turn the call over to Kim Myers. You may begin.

Kim Myers: Good afternoon and thank you for joining us for our fiscal year 2018 to 2022 strategic plan consultation. I'd like to introduce who is in the room with me today and will be providing you with the strategic plan overview.

We have our Chairman, Mr. Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri, our Vice Chair, Ms. Kathryn Isom-Clause and our Commissioner, Sequoyah Simermeyer.

We are scheduled to go until 4:00 p.m. today. However, we may end early as long as all tribal comments and questions are received. We will also be transcribing this consultation. So when you speak, please be sure you include your state, your name and/or organization and the designee from your tribal government.

This consultation is not open to the public or media. We will take brief pauses after each of our strategic goals for questions. We will also have a general question and answer session at the end of the actual consultation.

As a reminder, if you do not wish to submit a question today, either through our virtual conference room on Adobe Connect or through the conference line, you may submit your written comments and questions to our office and that contact information will be provided to you at the end of the consultation.

Comments will be accepted until August 11, 2017. Again, thank you for joining us today. And at this time, I'd like to turn the consultation over to our Chairman, Mr. Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri.

Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri: Thank you, Ms. Myers. And thank you again to everyone that took time out of their day to join us for this important consultation. Your valuable insights strengthen our work.

I would also like to thank Vice Chair Isom-Clause for leading the strategic plan working group that is composed of subject matter experts from our Offices of the Chief of Staff and General Counsel.

Strategic plans are required every four years by all government agencies at the beginning of each new term of an administration. This strategic plan was developed with input from the full Commission and our team of subject matter experts and senior leadership.

The goals and objectives that we developed through this process reflect our current priorities and methods of operations. These priorities and methods have been shaped by years of active and meaningful consultation with Indian Country and engagement with the general public as well.

Thus, tribal consultation and public engagement have long been central to the NIGC's efforts to achieve sound regulation in a manner that is respectful of tribal sovereignty and does not unnecessarily stymie economic opportunity.

We have also developed measurable benchmarks to accompany our goals and objectives that have been crafted to ensure accountability and transparency in our work.

The NIGC's current strategic plan expires in 2018 and will be replaced by the final version of this draft plan that will take us through 2022. It will set the course of our training, communication, compliance, employee development and outreach efforts.

The strategic plan allows the public and all stakeholders a transparent view of our daily activities and our plans to move the agency forward.

It is a valuable tool for communicating to Agency managers, employees, Congress and the public a vision for the future. It describes general and long-term goals we strive to achieve, what actions the Commission will take to realize those goals and how the NIGC will deal with the challenges and risks that may hinder achieving results.

At this time, I would like to ask fellow commissioner, Associate Commissioner Sequoyah Simermeyer, to further explain our process and timeline.

Sequoyah Simermeyer: Great. Thanks, Chairman. Before the Vice Chair explains the mission behind the draft plan and the plan structure, I'm going to discuss some of the key milestones that have already occurred and that will take place in the next six months.

I also want to acknowledge the Vice Chair's work in leading the draft plan's development. So thank you.

One item to note in the timeline of the plan's development is the August 11 date that Ms. Myers mentioned earlier. The Agency will receive the Tribe's feedback during this session today as well as in writing through August 11.

A second item to note is that the plan will be finalized and published in February 2018. A third final item to note is that many of the milestones in the plan's development reflects an exchange between the Agency and the Office of Management and Budget.

As the Chair just mentioned, this plan helps to ensure that the National Indian Gaming Commission meets its obligations to good governance principles. Meeting these obligations requires coordination with the administration and with government-wide standards.

The strategic plan will define the Agency mission, long-term goals, strategies, plan and the approaches the NIGC will use to monitor its progress in directing specific national problems, needs, challenges and opportunities related to the Agency's mission.

The Agency's strategic goals and objectives should be used to align resources and guide decision-making to accomplish priorities to improve outcomes. The strategic plan is prepared pursuant to the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 and is required to be updated every four years.

The strategic plan governs how the Agency does its work and creates uniform principles by which we will operate to ensure consistency across the Agency and accountability to our stakeholders.

Finally, in describing some of the reasons behind our process, the National Indian Gaming Commission recognizes the importance of tribal consultation. It is important to formulate durable policies and maintain the government-to-government relationship with tribal nations.

The Commission does not operate in a vacuum. As we seek your feedback and finalize the strategic plan, we know that the coordination with tribes, the regional level relationships and with government-wide reform efforts will need to guide the NIGC's work. So we thank you for engaging with us today.

Now, Vice Chair Isom-Clause will review the draft plan's missions and vision of the NIGC.

Kathryn Isom-Clause: Thank you, Commissioner Simermeyer. The mission of the NIGC flows directly from IGRA, which recognizes the fundamental federal policy goal of tribal self-determination. The NIGC's mission is to promote tribal economic development, self-sufficiency and strong tribal government, maintain the integrity of the Indian gaming industry and ensure that tribes are the primary beneficiaries of their gaming activities.

To fulfill its mission and achieve compliance, the NIGC works within the framework created by IGRA by providing sound guidance, removing unnecessary roadblocks and sensibly regulating gaming activities conducted by sovereign Indian tribes on Indian land.

Our mission statement guides our vision for the Agency and how we direct our long-term planning. The Commission's vision is to utilize all of its regulatory tools, including training, technical assistance, public education and enforcement to empower and partner with tribal governments to ensure

regulatory compliance and gaming integrity that respects the capabilities and responsibilities of each sovereign tribe.

Just as IGRA has defined our mission at the Agency, the vision statement has guided the development of our strategic plan. As Chairman Chaudhuri explained, every four years the NIGC updates its strategic plan to reflect the Agency's current priorities and how it will accomplish them.

The strategic plan also includes general information about the structure and functions of the Agency. In this draft strategic plan, we set out five goals. These goals should look familiar if you've been to our previous tribal consultation sessions as they mirror our initiatives.

The goals are long-term, outcome oriented plans for the impact we want to have as an Agency. We plan to continue to strengthen and build on each of these goals in the future.

Our goals are first to protect against gamesmanship, maintain a strong workforce, leverage technology to support our mission, increase outreach to small rural gaming tribes. And we also have an operational goal to deliver appropriate resources, solutions and services in an efficient and effective manner to benefit stakeholders.

As you will see in this presentation, and when you review the draft strategic plan, each goal is supported by two to four objectives. The objectives reflect the outcomes we want to achieve to accomplish each goal. Under each objective, we have two to ten strategies. These are the specific actions that we will take.

Finally, we have performance measures to track our effectiveness in accomplishing the strategic plan's goals and objectives. This data will also help us to measure the effectiveness of the plan itself and what we may need to recalibrate throughout the five-year term of the plan.

Once the strategic plan is implemented, our progress on the performance measures will be publicly available on our Web site on our performance dashboard.

Today we will just provide an overview of the plan and answer any specific questions you might have. I would also like to thank the teams from the Office of the Chief of Staff and General Counsel for contributing subject matter expertise over many months in the development of this strategic plan.

Many of these individuals are here today and will be available to answer any technical questions that you have.

Next Chairman Chaudhuri will walk us through our first strategic goal.

Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri: Thank you, Vice Chair. Our gamesmanship goal touches every corner of our work. It reflects our commitment to sound regulation through comprehensive efforts that are respectful of tribal sovereignty and do not unnecessarily inhibit economic opportunity.

Flowing directly from IGRA itself, our gamesmanship goal is a simple way of highlighting our statutory responsibility to protect against third-party threats to tribal assets and operations and to ensure that tribes remain the primary beneficiaries of their operations.

We will continue to protect against anything that amounts to gamesmanship on the backs of tribes through meaningful communication, training, technical assistance and utilize the NIGC's enforcement authorities when necessary.

Our first objective under the gamesmanship goal is to enhance awareness of gamesmanship and improve tribal government, regulator and operator capacity to detect the occurrence of gamesmanship.

In short, we define gamesmanship as encompassing requirements of IGRA to support tribal status as primary beneficiaries of their operations, or tribe status as primary beneficiaries of their operations, as well as incorporating all aspects of IGRA that support tribal primary beneficiary status.

As an Agency, we're committed to the idea that strong collaborative relationships with our partners present the most effective way to ensure compliance. This requires strong partnerships within the Indian gaming industry to ensure that the NIGC continues to monitor and maintain the integrity of the industry effectively.

To achieve this goal, the NIGC will incorporate eight strategies. A few included in the materials that you have available I would like to highlight here.

One, building partnerships within the Indian gaming community.

Two, creating and improving tools and technology.

Three, creating and updating training courses.

And, four, ensuring stakeholders receive coordinated and consistent information.

We have also established performance measures to demonstrate the effectiveness of our comprehensive regulatory framework. These can also be found in the draft materials that you have before you.

IGRA is a legal statute that established the National Indian Gaming Commission to ensure tribal assets are protected against third-party threats. As stated before, we define those responsibilities through our gamesmanship objective.

To support this, the NIGC's second objective under the gamesmanship goal -- I'm sorry -- under the gamesmanship goal is to prevent and eliminate ongoing gamesmanship by utilizing the NIGC's enforcement authority to ensure that the gaming fulfills the legislative purposes of IGRA.

The Agency will work with our regulatory partners in identifying compliance weaknesses through analysis of data, such as financial statements and AUP reports and additionally through site visits with tribal governments, tribal regulators and operators.

The Agency will work with regulatory partners to bring appropriate enforcement actions that not only correct identified violations of IGRA, but bring clarity to the industry and deter bad actors.

It is also important to note that the Commission strives to develop trusted contacts within the industry that allow us to have obtained information accurately and quickly.

There are lots of strategies listed for the goals. Please feel free to review them and ask questions during the Q&A.

Kim Myers: Thank you, Chairman. We would now like to open the line for questions to the Commission on the gamesmanship goal. We will alternate between the phone lines and the virtual conference room. Operator, do you have any individuals in queue that would like to ask questions at this time?

Coordinator: Thank you. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question, just press star followed by 1 and record your name clearly. Again, that is star followed by 1 to ask a question. And one moment please, for our first question.

At this time, I'm showing no questions on the phone lines.

Kim Myers: Great. Thank you. Vice Chair, I return this discussion back to you for goal two.

Kathryn Isom-Clause: Thank you, Ms. Myers. Our second goal is to maintain a strong workforce, both within the Agency as well as with NIGC's tribal regulatory partners.

Maintaining a strong workforce is twofold. First, the Agency is statutorily required by IGRA to support the self-sufficiency and self-determination of tribes. And supporting the tribal gaming workforce is an important goal to achieve tribal self-sufficiency.

Second, the Agency must also support its own staff and employees that serve the tribal gaming industry. To accomplish this, the Commission has proposed four objectives focusing on both our internal and external workforce.

First, the NIGC will provide training to tribal regulatory partners to promote tribal economic development, self-sufficiency and strong tribal governments. Our efforts will focus on educating tribal governments, regulators and operators on Indian gaming law and regulations so they may make well-informed decisions.

We will also strengthen the impact and effectiveness of these trainings by fostering best practices, facilitating partnerships and identifying gaps in training.

To strengthen the tribal gaming workforce, it is important to provide varied methods of training that can meet the abilities of diverse learners. To accomplish this, the Agency set forth a second objective to utilize technology in a variety of hands on learning and virtual learning modalities to support efficient and effective training and technical assistance to regulatory partners.

We will offer ongoing in-person and virtual access to training and incorporate a learning management system to increase ease of access and user ability for the industry workforce.

To support our internal workforce, the Agency will create reasonable goals for employee engagement. Additionally, supervisors and managers across all of our divisions will foster an environment where employees have more opportunities to provide input into decisions and feel included and engaged.

To more accurately identify the needs of our employees, the NIGC will utilize the federal employee viewpoint survey. This is an annual survey provided to Agency employees that allows them the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on the climate and culture of the Agency.

The survey focuses on areas of morale, health and well-being, recognition and the leadership of the Agency. The Commission will evaluate the results and implement action plans to improve areas identified as weaknesses or in need of improvement.

Our fourth objective to create a strong workforce commits us to investing in the Agency's employee's training, work life programs and performance management to recruit, hire and retain the most qualified and motivated employees to ensure a talented and diverse workforce.

To ensure our employees maintain expertise and are prepared for the future, the NIGC will implement employee programs that foster development and knowledge sharing. We will also support supervisors and managers through training and providing resources to strengthen leadership.

Kim Myers: Thank you, Vice Chair. Operator, as we pause for this moment, do you have any questions on the line for our second strategic goal?

Coordinator: And at this time, if you would like to ask a question, just press star followed by 1. And one moment, please.

At this time, I'm showing no questions on the phone line.

Kim Myers: Thank you. I'll now return the presentation to Commissioner Simermeyer to continue our discussion.

Sequoyah Simermeyer: Thank you. The proposed plan's third goal is technology, specifically the plan proposes that the National Indian Gaming Commission will leverage reliable and emerging industry technology trends to support

tribal economic development, self-sufficiency and the integrity of Indian gaming.

The first of four objectives under the technology goal proposes that the National Indian Gaming Commission stays relevant about development in the gaming industry, including best practices and emerging technologies and utilizes this knowledge to raise awareness of these developments among our tribal regulatory partners.

The National Indian Gaming Commission is committed to making the best use of our resources and assisting our stakeholders in providing information on industry technology trends and best practices.

The plan proposes conducting research, collecting data, performing analysis and disseminating information to promote awareness of development in the gaming industry. Through these efforts, we would encourage greater sharing of best practices.

Moving to the second of the four objectives. The NIGC must be a leader in the industry. With our 30 years of experience, there is no other government agency that can support the industry better. With this in mind, the plan proposes furthering the technology goal with the second objective, which is providing subject matter expertise to the Indian gaming industry in the field of technology.

The National Indian Gaming Commission has been working with tribes to identify and remediate vulnerabilities, cyber-attacks or risks to patrons. As part of this objective, the National Indian Gaming Commission will continue hosting training events and encourage tribes to request IT vulnerability

assessments to support education efforts and enhance preparedness in alleviating vulnerabilities of gaming data systems.

The continuing evolution of technology and the responsibility to provide quality and at times time sensitive information to our regulatory partners underlies the third of the four objectives under the technology goal.

The track plan aims to strengthen information and communication systems to support timely decision-making and a dissemination of information to all Agency staff.

The NIGC recognizes the importance of having adequate technology for internal staff in order to support our customers in the field and at gaming facilities. The Agency has taken strides to expand and improve technology to better provide for timelier service to our internal and external customers.

Improving and expanding our internal communications would allow a platform for Agency employees to collaborate and share information across the Agency between regional and satellite offices and with headquarters.

Our final objective for the technology goal is to maintain the internal technology infrastructure and continuity of technology services. We are committed to using modern tools to improve efficiencies throughout the Agency by exploring new technologies and improving the current infrastructure.

Under this proposed objective, the NIGC will replace any outdated and time-consuming applications in order to increase automation, expand technologies and maintain a secure network.

This completes an overview of the technology goal. Ms. Myers?

Kim Myers: Thank you, Commissioner Simermeyer. Operator, by chance are there any questions on the line for our third goal?

Coordinator: And again, if you'd like to ask a question at this time, just press star followed by 1. And one moment, please.

At this time, I'm showing no questions.

Kim Myers: Great. Thank you. The Chairman will continue with our fourth goal.

Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri: Thank you, Ms. Myers. Our fourth goal is rural outreach. We recognize the impact small and rural gaming tribes have on local communities and the role that even the most modest operations have in supporting employment in tribal communities and the surrounding areas.

To further our efforts, the NIGC is implementing rural outreach as our fourth strategic goal. The NIGC will develop and execute a plan for small rural gaming tribes that strengthens our training, technical assistance and regulations.

No matter the size of the operations, the Commission is committed to providing training and technical assistance to support the needs of all tribes but recognizes rural tribes may have unique challenges.

The first objective of our rural outreach goal is to increase engagement and outreach through Agency training and technical assistance for the unique circumstances of small rural gaming tribes.

We will work to support these tribes by reviewing current data to determine whether there are regulatory issues that may be more prevalent with smaller rural gaming operations and develop and undertake new technical assistance methods in training that meet the needs of smaller rural gaming tribes.

Additionally, we will review regulations to determine whether they are overly burdensome to smaller operations. The NIGC has historically taken into account the needs and capabilities of smaller gaming operations through its regulations to ensure fair regulating landscapes.

We will continue to do so and further this objective by consulting with tribes regarding any potential changes to the regulations to support smaller rural operations and review recommendations to regulations that may overburden smaller operations.

Kim Myers: Thank you, Chairman. We'll pause briefly to see if there are any questions on the line.

Coordinator: And again, just press star followed by 1 at this time if you'd like to ask a question. And one moment, please.

At this time, I'm showing no questions on the phone lines.

Kim Myers: Thank you. Vice Chair, the floor is yours for our final goal.

Kathryn Isom-Clause: Thank you, again, Ms. Myers. Our fifth goal is to deliver appropriate resources, solutions and services in an efficient and effective manner to benefit stakeholders.

NIGC employees strive to provide superior service in delivering information to our stakeholders. To achieve the highest quality of service delivery, managers and supervisors will hold employees accountable and provide timely and effective feedback.

To meet this objective, the Commission has six strategies, including simplifying processes and procedures by removing duplicative tasks or unnecessary steps and initiating an annual review of Agency policy and procedures.

Because we are solely funded by revenue from gaming tribes, it is imperative that the Commission be fiscally responsible, transparent and accountable in the financial management of the Agency.

Five point two. Okay. Here we are. Sorry for the confusion, folks.

We will seek to identify opportunities to share information about the Agency's financial resources with tribes and obtain tribal input on this information. The NIGC will also continue to responsibly manage its financial resources through a balanced budget.

This concludes a review of the goals and strategies for our strategic plan. On behalf of the Commission, I would like to thank you for attending our FY2018 to 2022 draft strategic plan consultation.

Kim Myers: Thank you, Vice Chair, and the entire Commission. At this time, we will open the lines for any additional questions on the goals and objectives outlined in our draft strategic plan.

Operator, do we have any questions in queue?

Coordinator: And again at this time, if you would like to ask a question, just press star 1. We do have one question coming in. One moment, please.

I believe that question comes from (Jill). Your line is open. If you press star 1, your line is open. Go ahead with your question. And again, if you press star 1, your line is open at this time. I believe the name was (Jill). You may ask your question.

Cheryl Andrews-Maltais: Good afternoon. This Chairwoman Cheryl Andrews-Maltais. And I just really wanted to thank you so very much for the work and effort that you have put into the strategic plan and specifically with the emphasis on, you know, focusing on how to assist small and rural tribes is really critical for us, being that our tribe is one.

And I just wanted to thank you for the work. Everything looks great and I'm looking forward to utilizing some of the technical expertise and assistance that you will provide.

Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri: And thank you so much for that. Your guidance and input has been extraordinarily helpful to get us to this point.

Again, many thanks to Vice Chair and the entire team who worked on our end of the strategic plan. But it's really the input and perspectives from Indian Country and through the Indian gaming community that has helped shape our Agency direction. So it truly goes all around for any positives in this proposed plan.

Kim Myers: Very good.

Jonodev Osceola Chaudhuri: Thank you.

Kim Myers: I'd also like to remind those that are attending virtually in our Adobe Connect conference room that you can type a question in the chat box and the Commission is able to see that and respond.

Coordinator: And on the phone lines, I'm showing no further questions.

Kim Myers: Well, thank you all so much for your time. Again, if you have any additional follow-up questions or comments that you would like to address to the Commission, we will be taking those comments between now and August 11.

The contact information to submit your written comments is available on the slides that you currently see and address those to Ms. (Denise Duluo) at NIGC.gov or you may send via U.S. Post.

We again thank you for your time today to review our draft strategic plan. Also, as a reminder, this information, the slides, the draft, the strategic plan are all available on our Web site at this time. Thank you for attending.

Coordinator: Thank you. And this does conclude today's conference then. We thank you for your participation. And at this time, you may disconnect your lines.

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