

POLICY

Government-to-Government Tribal Relationship Policy

RF 4-2

Category: Regional and Foundational Policies

Business Unit Responsible: RA: Community Relations

Policy Owner: Director of Community Relations

Policy Contact: Allison Waukau, Tribal Liaison

Synopsis: Establishing the Metropolitan's policy for formal consultation with Minnesota's Tribal Nations and cooperation with Tribal communities on Metropolitan Council decisions.

POLICY

The Metropolitan Council recognizes Tribal Nations as sovereign governments with inherent rights to self-determination. In partnership with Tribal Nations and American Indian community members living in the metropolitan area, the Metropolitan Council commits to meaningful consultation, coordination, culturally responsive planning, and collaborative decision-making across housing, transit, community development, and environmental services to ensure American Indian voices are reflected in access to housing, safe and inclusive transit, culturally grounded development, and environmental stewardship.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

In 2019, Governor Tim Walz issued Executive Order 19-24, reaffirming the government-to-government relationship between the State of Minnesota and Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota (hereinafter "Tribal Nations"). In 2023, the legislature passed Minn. Stat. § 10.65, codifying the provisions of Executive Order 19-24 into state law.

The purpose of this policy is to formalize and strengthen the government-to-government relationship between the Metropolitan Council and Tribal Nations to ensure that American Indian voices are represented and respected across all areas of Metropolitan Council work.

This policy will be updated once every other year, with the option to review earlier, to ensure continued alignment with Tribal consultation best practices and to reflect the evolving government-to-government relationships between Tribal Nations and the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council commits to incorporating input gathered from Tribal Nations into its decision-making processes, ensuring that Tribal perspectives are meaningfully considered in policies, programs, and initiatives that impact American Indian communities.

Commitment to the Metropolitan American Indian Community

The Metropolitan Council is dedicated to centering Tribal community voices, ensuring that American Indian perspectives, leadership, and lived experiences shape decisions and initiatives that impact the metropolitan region.

The Metropolitan Council strives to build genuine partnerships, fostering relationships rooted in trust, respect, and shared purpose with American Indian Organizations, leaders, and Tribal community at large.

The Metropolitan Council commits to cultural responsiveness that recognizes and integrates American Indian values, histories, and traditions into its work to create inclusive and meaningful engagement and partnership.

The Metropolitan Council pledges to a long-term commitment that moves beyond short-term interactions to sustained collaboration, accountability, and support for the ongoing needs and aspirations of the Metropolitan American Indian Community.

Focus Areas

Metropolitan Council Members, the Chair, and division directors and managers will participate in the Tribal-State Relations Training. Metropolitan Council employees whose work is likely to include engaging with the Metropolitan American Indian Community or includes matters that have Tribal implications, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 10.65, will be encouraged and supported in participating in Tribal-State Relations Training, thereby reinforcing the Council's dedication to strengthening government-to-government relationships between the Metropolitan Council and Tribal Nations and fostering a deeper understanding of Tribal sovereignty and perspectives.

The Metropolitan Council will honor its Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment and uphold its responsibilities, ensuring its actions reflect respect, recognition, and support for American Indian communities. This commitment also extends to actively supporting and collaborating with the American Indian Advisory Council to implement the regional development guide, valuing its guidance, leadership, and contributions in shaping policies, programs, and initiatives that serve and empower American Indian communities in the metropolitan area.

IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Metropolitan Council leadership and staff will consult directly with Tribal leadership and Tribal staff on a peer-to-peer basis to ensure communication and coordination between the Metropolitan Council and the Tribes prior to taking actions that may affect Tribes or Tribal interests.

Accountability:

1. The Regional Administrator or designee is responsible for administering this policy.
2. The Regional Administrator or designee will collaborate with the Director of Community Relations and the Tribal Liaison to establish procedures to implement the policy and ensure that the procedures are consistent with this policy.
3. In accordance with state statute, the Metropolitan Council Chair is responsible for direct consultation and communication with a Tribal Council Chairman, Chairwoman, or President. The Metropolitan Council Chair, in collaboration with Council Members, may also designate Council Members to participate in consultation.
4. Division leaders are responsible for being aware of this policy and ensuring that their division's employees are aware of the policy and its implications for their work. To ensure government-to-government protocols are followed, any communication with Tribal Nations including with Tribal staff should be coordinated with the Metropolitan Council Tribal Liaison.

DEFINITIONS

Metropolitan American Indian Community: The Metropolitan American Indian Community refers to American Indian individuals, families, and organizations living in the metropolitan area, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 473.121, representing tribes from across the U.S., including all Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota. This intertribal metropolitan area community began to grow significantly during the federal relocation era of the 1950s–70s, when American Indian people were moved from reservations to cities. Today, it remains a vibrant center of American Indian life, culture, and advocacy on Dakota homeland.

Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota: The 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota are:

1. Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
2. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
3. Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
4. Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
5. Lower Sioux Indian Community
6. Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
7. Prairie Island Indian Community
8. Red Lake Nation
9. Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
10. Upper Sioux Community
11. White Earth Nation

Consultation: The direct and interactive involvement of the Minnesota Tribal governments in the development of policy on matters that have Tribal implications. Consultation is the proactive, affirmative process of identifying and seeking input from appropriate Tribal governments and considering their interest as a necessary and integral part of the decision-making process. Minn. Stat. § 10.65.

Collaboration: All parties work together efficiently to achieve shared goals in planning and project development.

Coordination: Parties align plans by: Sharing and comparing plans, programs, and schedules adjusting to optimize project delivery and service consistency.

American Indian Organization: A non-profit organization that fits at least two of the following three criteria:

- (1) The service population are members of the American Indian community;
- (2) The Executive Director is American Indian; or
- (3) The majority of the Board of Directors is American Indian.

Indigenous: People who have originally inhabited a country or geographic region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of the present country boundaries, and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions.

Self-Determination: Self-determination is the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to freely determine their political status, govern their own affairs, preserve and develop their cultures, and make decisions

that affect their communities, lands, and futures. It includes the ability to exercise sovereignty, maintain traditional governance systems, and access resources and opportunities without external interference.

Tribal Sovereignty: Sovereignty is the inherent right of Tribal Nations to design and control their own future. This involves exercising self-determination and self-governance, thereby empowering Tribal Nations to shape their destiny. Sovereignty means that Tribes operate as independent nations within a nation. They have their own constitutions and systems designed to meet their people's needs. The United States has recognized Tribes' sovereignty through treaties since its founding. The U.S. Constitution states that treaties are "the supreme law of the land." In order to make a treaty, two sovereign nations must come together, recognize each other's right to self-determination, and create an agreement.

Tribal-State Relations Training: The training described in Minn. Stat. § 10.65 that educates Minnesota state agency employees about American Indian Tribal governments, histories, cultures, and traditions. Minnesota Statutes section 10.65 defines "agency" to include the Metropolitan Council.

RESOURCES

Statutory Resources

- [Minn. Stat. § 10.65](#)
- [Minn. Stat. § 473.121](#)

Other Resources

- [Imagine MSP 2050](#)
- [Public Engagement Plan](#)
- [Guide to Respectful, Inclusive Language](#)
- [Executive Order 19-24](#)
- [Metropolitan Council Resolution 2025-07](#)
- [Land, Water, and People Acknowledgement](#)

HISTORY

Version 3 – Template Update

Version 2 – Template Update

10/12/2020 - Updated content into new template.

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07/24/2019

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Former Reference

2-7

Version

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