



BUDGET The United States
Department of the Interior
JUSTIFICATIONS

and Performance Information
Fiscal Year 2021

**NATIONAL INDIAN
GAMING COMMISSION**

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL INDIAN GAMING COMMISSION**

FY 2021 Budget Justification

Table of Contents

Item	Page Number
<u>Executive Summary</u>	
Executive Summary	1
Mission, Vision, and General Statement	2
The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988	4
Commission Structure	5
Organization Chart	6
Budget Priorities	8
Background	8
Annual Fees for Operations	9
<u>2021 Budget</u>	
Narrative Summary Statement	10
Summary of the FY 2021 Budget	11
Reimbursable Expenses	11
Fee Regulation	12
Authorization, Objectives and Program Activities	13
Employee Count by Grade	15
<u>Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Information</u>	
<u>Summary and Highlights of Commission Activities</u>	

Executive Summary



National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC)

Executive Summary

The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC or “Commission”) was created by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-497). The purpose of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) is, in part, to promote tribal economic development and self-determination; support the integrity of the Indian gaming industry; and ensure that tribes are the primary beneficiaries of their gaming activities. To ensure those purposes of IGRA are carried out, IGRA created the NIGC as an “independent Federal regulatory authority for gaming on Indian lands... to meet congressional concerns regarding gaming and to protect such gaming as a means of generating tribal revenue.”¹

In addition to the NIGC, there are approximately 6,000 Tribal Gaming Regulators serving as the primary regulators of Indian gaming operations in 29 states. Further, states provide appropriate regulatory support to implement their respective responsibilities under IGRA and tribal-state compacts. Besides the NIGC, tribal and state regulatory agencies, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, and the Department of the Treasury all implement and enforce laws that serve to ensure that tribes are the primary beneficiaries of Indian gaming. The NIGC coordinates closely with all of these governmental entities to fulfill the mandates of IGRA.

The NIGC’s budget is tied to the mandates of IGRA. In May 2006, Congress enacted the Native American Technical Corrections Act of 2006 (Sec. 301 of P.L. 109-221). This Act authorizes the Commission to collect up to 0.080 percent of the gross gaming revenue, but also links NIGC’s fee collections to the growth or contraction of the Indian gaming industry so that the agency’s funding reflects the financial status of the industry. Importantly, the Act also identified training and technical assistance as agency functions. As in the past, the FY 2021 budget will continue to include expanding tribal consultation and improving intergovernmental coordination, providing training and technical assistance to tribal gaming commissions and operations, conducting a regulatory review, examining and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission, and enhancing the information technology infrastructure.

¹ 25 U.S.C. § 2702(3).

Mission

The NIGC's mission is to (1) promote tribal economic development, self-sufficiency, and strong tribal governments; (2) maintain the integrity of the Indian gaming industry; and (3) 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 the IGRA by providing sound guidance, removing unnecessary roadblocks, and sensibly regulating gaming activities conducted by sovereign Indian tribes on Indian lands without stymieing the economic development and entrepreneurial spirit of tribes.

Vision

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

General Statement

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) established the National Indian Gaming Commission as an independent federal regulatory agency within the Department of the Interior. IGRA created the NIGC to protect tribal gaming as a means of generating revenue for tribal governance and tribal communities. IGRA further provides a legal framework structured to safeguard tribes as the primary beneficiaries of their gaming operations, support the integrity of the Indian gaming industry, and assure that gaming is conducted fairly and honestly by both the operators and players.

The NIGC ensures compliance with IGRA, NIGC regulations, and tribal gaming ordinances with 520 gaming establishments owned, operated, or licensed by 247 federally-recognized tribes located within 29 states. To do so, the Commission regulates and monitors tribal gaming activity, inspects gaming premises, conducts background investigations, analyzes audits of Class II and certain aspects of Class III gaming operations, and investigates violations of IGRA. The NIGC also coordinates its regulatory responsibilities with tribal regulatory agencies through the review and approval of tribal gaming ordinances and management agreements. The NIGC further provides technical assistance, including extensive training, to tribal leaders as well as tribal gaming commissions and operators. The Commission may issue guidance to improve the operation and understanding of its regulatory goals. In addition, the Commission considers its Office of Self-Regulation's recommendations when a tribe petitions for a certificate of self-regulation.

When technical assistance and training do not result in compliance with IGRA, NIGC regulations, or the tribal gaming ordinance, the NIGC will undertake enforcement action, which may include imposing appropriate sanctions for such violations, such as civil penalties and orders for temporary closure as well as referring criminal matters to appropriate tribal, Federal and state entities. As the NIGC fulfills these responsibilities,

the Commission closely reviews any indications of corrupting influences, such as gamesmanship by non-tribal governmental entities.

IGRA authorizes the Commission to assess and collect fees on tribal gaming revenues to cover agency operating costs. The NIGC also conducts background investigations, including fingerprinting, of individuals and entities with a financial interest in, or management responsibility for, potential management contracts. These investigations are conducted to determine whether the management contracts can be approved. The Commission is reimbursed periodically by the potential contractors for performing these investigative services. The Commission is also reimbursed for fingerprint processing costs.

The Commission has unique relationships with the Indian gaming industry's stakeholders. The Commission, as an agency of the Federal government, maintains a trust relationship with Indian nations. The Commission is committed to meaningful consultation with tribes prior to making changes to regulations or policies having tribal implications. Additionally, the Commission endeavors to provide tribes, states, sister Federal agencies, and stakeholders with courteous and timely responses to issues as they arise.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) of 1988

In 1987, the Supreme Court affirmed the inherent sovereign authority of tribes to operate and regulate gaming facilities on Indian lands free from state regulation if the state did not prohibit gaming. *California v. Cabazon Band of Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987). The following year, Congress enacted the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. Embodied in IGRA was a compromise between state and tribal interests. The drafters “balance[d] the need for sound enforcement of gaming laws and regulations, with a strong Federal interest in preserving the sovereign rights of tribal governments to regulate activities and enforce laws on Indian lands.”² IGRA fully preserved tribal regulatory authority over Class II gaming without state intervention. However, IGRA gave the states a role in determining the scope and extent of tribal gaming by requiring tribal-state compacts for Class III gaming.

IGRA establishes the jurisdictional framework that governs Indian gaming. IGRA establishes three classes of games with a different regulatory scheme for each.

- Class I gaming is defined as traditional and social Indian gaming for minimal prizes. Regulatory authority over Class I gaming is vested exclusively in tribal governments.
- Class II gaming is defined as the game of chance commonly known as bingo (whether or not electronic, computer, or other technological aids are used in connection therewith) and (if played in the same location) pull-tabs, lotto, punchboards, tip jars, instant bingo and other games similar to bingo. Class II gaming also includes non-banked card games. IGRA specifically excludes slot machines or electronic facsimiles of any game of chance from the definition of Class II games. Tribes retain their authority to conduct, license and regulate Class II gaming as long as the state in which the tribe is located permits such gaming for any purpose, and the tribal government adopts a gaming ordinance approved by the Commission. Tribal governments are responsible for regulating Class II gaming, with Commission oversight.
- Class III is defined as all forms of gaming that are neither Class I nor Class II. Games commonly played in casinos, such as slot machines, blackjack, craps, and roulette, fall in the Class III category. Class III gaming is often referred to as full-scale casino-style gaming. As a compromise among tribal, state and Federal interests, IGRA restricts tribal authority to conduct Class III gaming. Before a tribe may lawfully conduct Class III gaming, the following conditions must be met: (1) the facility must be located in a State that permits such gaming for any purpose by any person, organization or entity; (2) the tribe and the state must have negotiated a compact that has been approved by the Secretary of the Interior, or the Secretary must have approved regulatory procedures; and (3) the tribe must have adopted a tribal gaming ordinance that has been approved by the Chair of the

² 134 Cong. Rec. S12649 (daily ed. Sept. 15, 1988).

Commission. State and tribal governments are primarily responsible for regulating Class III gaming.

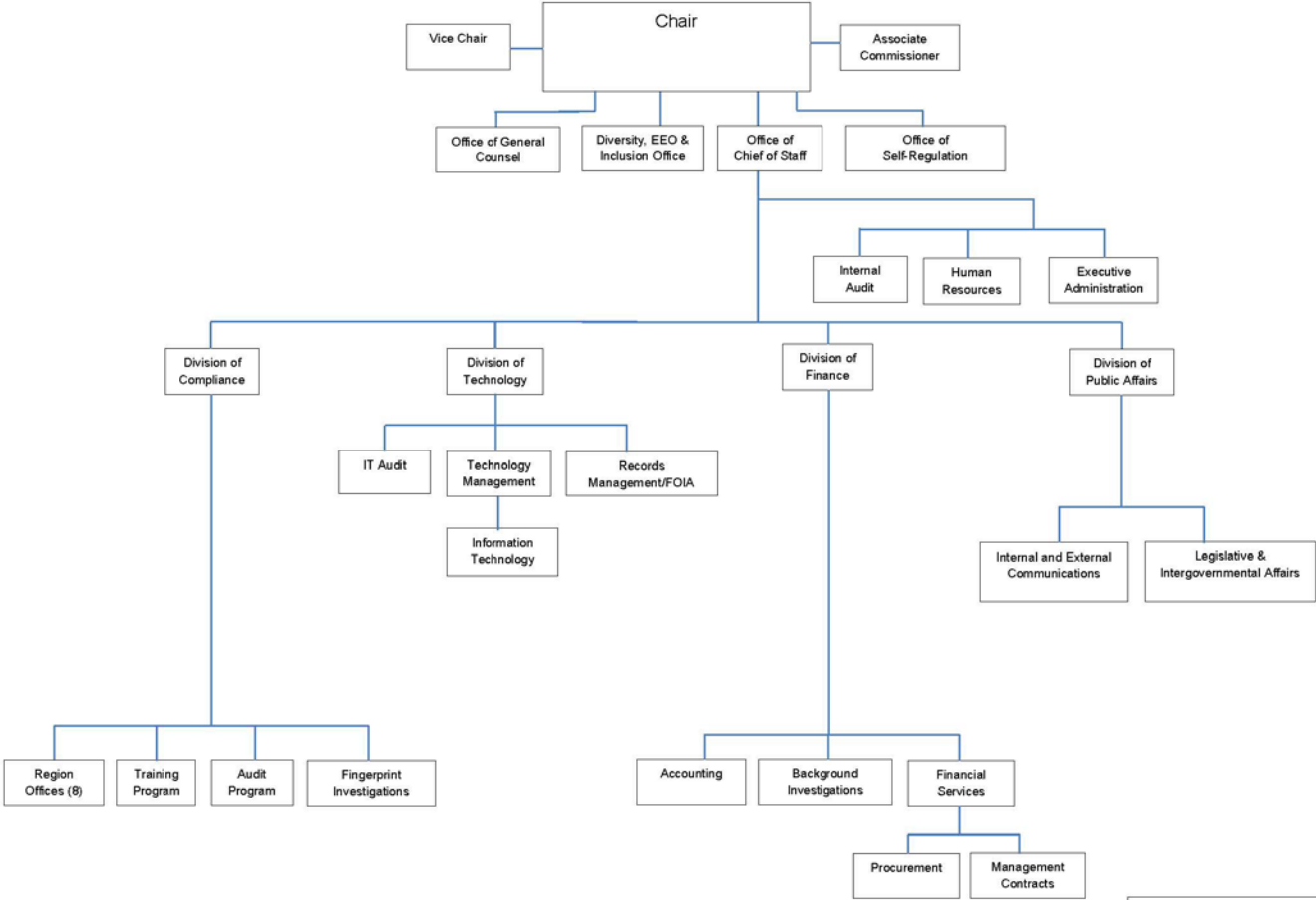
Although Congress clearly intended states to address Class III regulatory issues in tribal-state compacts, IGRA did not make this mandatory, and many states accordingly rely upon continued tribal and Federal oversight by the NIGC to address their regulatory concerns regarding Class III tribal gaming under IGRA. Additionally, IGRA tasks the NIGC with a number of specific regulatory functions, such as: approving tribal ordinances for Class II and Class III gaming; approving management contracts; promulgating and implementing regulations; and ensuring tribes and management contractors comply with IGRA and Commission rules and regulations. Accordingly, the Commission plays a key role in the oversight and regulation of both Class II and Class III gaming.

Commission Structure

The Commission is composed of a Chair, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and two Associate Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of the Interior after a public notice and comment period. The Commission selects a Vice Chair by majority vote. IGRA established the NIGC as a bipartisan agency, permitting only two of the three Commissioners to be from the same political party. In addition, at least two members of the Commission must be enrolled tribal members. The NIGC's organizational structure is composed of two main branches, the Office of General Counsel which handles legal affairs, and the Office of the Chief of Staff, which manages day-to-day activities and includes the Division of Compliance, Division of Finance, Division of Public Affairs, and the Division of Technology.

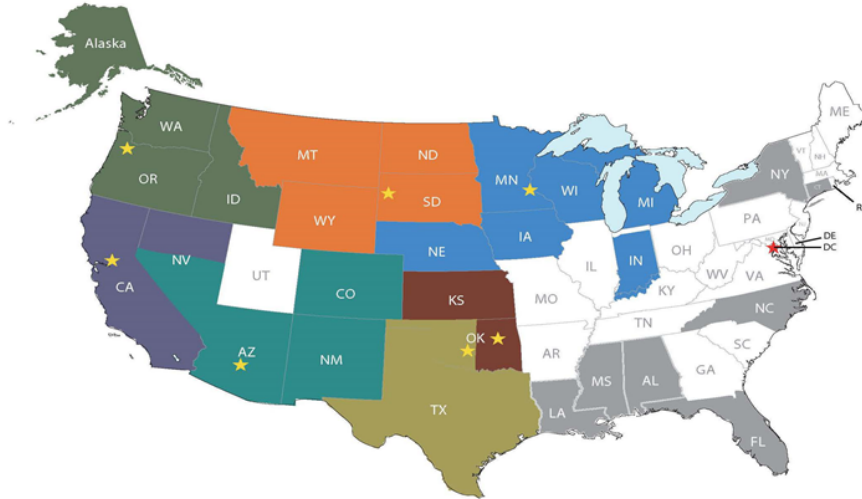
The Commission provides Federal oversight to approximately 520 tribally owned, operated or licensed gaming establishments operating in 29 states. The Commission maintains its headquarters in Washington, DC, and has eight regional offices and one satellite office. The Commission has a combined staff of 110 full-time employees as of the end of 2019. Approximately half of the Commission staff is assigned to headquarters in Washington, DC, with the remaining staff assigned to regional offices located in Portland, Oregon; Sacramento, California; Phoenix, Arizona; St. Paul, Minnesota; Rapid City, South Dakota; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Washington, DC; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and a satellite office in Temecula, California.

NATIONAL INDIAN GAMING COMMISSION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Current as of 01/25/2019

National Indian Gaming Commission Regions



SOURCE: National Indian Gaming Commission

Regional Office	Areas Served
Portland	Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho
Sacramento	California, and northern Nevada
Phoenix	Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and southern Nevada
St. Paul	Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana
Rapid City	Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota
Tulsa	Kansas and eastern Oklahoma
Oklahoma City	Texas and western Oklahoma
Washington, D.C.	Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, New York and Connecticut

The Commission administratively established the locations of its field offices not to reflect the distribution of gaming activity or market considerations but to improve the level and quality of services it provides to tribes, and to enhance its ability to communicate, collaborate, and interact with tribes located within each office’s geographic region. The field offices are vital to carrying out the statutory responsibilities of the Commission. By having auditors and compliance officers close to tribal gaming facilities, the Commission seeks to facilitate compliance with the Act and foster better relationships with tribal leaders, officials and regulatory personnel. In addition to auditing and investigative activities, the field staff provides technical assistance and training to promote a better understanding of gaming controls within the regulated industry, and to enhance cooperation and compliance to ensure the integrity of gaming operations.

Budget Priorities

The Commission will continue its positive trend of improving services to tribal governments and tribal gaming commissions while finding a stable balance in its fee rate collections. Technology in the gaming industry continues to evolve, resulting in both greater efficiencies and new challenges. In order to keep pace with changes in technology, financial resources will be directed to providing technical training to the Commission staff and updating technology platforms. In addition, the agency will continue to provide up-to-date technical training to tribal gaming operators and regulators to assure their ability to regulate and safeguard the integrity of Indian gaming. Strategic flexibility will ensure that adequate resources are available to meet the growing needs for technical assistance and training in Indian gaming enterprises large and small.

Background

Prior to 1997, the Commission was legislatively prohibited from collecting fees in excess of \$1.5 million annually. The 1998 Interior Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-83) expanded the fee base to include Class III (casino style) gaming and raised the limitation on annual fee collections to \$8 million. In the 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 Interior Appropriations Acts, the Congress enacted a general provision raising this limitation to \$12 million for fiscal years 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 respectively. On May 12, 2006, Congress enacted the Native American Technical Corrections Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-221) providing a new limit to the fees of no more than 0.080 percent of the gross gaming revenues of all gaming operations.³

This amendment allowed the Commission to maintain a fee collection level in proportion to the size of the industry it oversees. With fees now capped at 0.080 percent of the industry's gross revenue, the Commission's funding expands or contracts in proportion to the growth or contraction of the Indian gaming industry. The Commission works to maintain a fee rate well below the statutory limit.

Another legislative change included in Public Law 109-221 was the requirement that the Commission, like other Federal agencies, be subject to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), and that any plan instituted in compliance with GPRA include technical assistance to tribal gaming operations.⁴ In accordance with this mandate, the NIGC submitted its GPRA Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2018 to 2022 to Congress and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The NIGC strategic plan is posted on the NIGC website.

³ 25 U.S.C. 2717(a)(2)(B).

⁴ 25 U.S.C. 2706(d)(1)-(2).

Annual Fees for Operations

The Commission assesses annual fees on tribal gaming revenues in accordance with procedures set forth in 25 C.F.R. Part 514. On January 22, 2018, the Commission published changes to the fees regulations in the Federal Register (83 FR 2903). The new regulations became effective on February 21, 2018. The new regulations are intended to improve the efficiency of the Commission's fee rate analysis and publication process, coincide the fee rate announcement with the annual release of the Gross Gaming Revenue numbers and the completion of the Commission's budget for the upcoming year, and mitigate the confusion that may arise from changing the fee rate twice a year. Under the prior regulations published in 2012, the Commission adopted a preliminary fee rate by March 1 and a final fee rate by June 1 of every year. The new regulations simplify this process by providing that the Commission will adopt a final fee rate no later than November 1 of each year. The new regulations also define the fiscal year used in calculating the annual fee so that one fee rate is applied consistently to a gaming operation's assessable gross revenues for one fiscal year. Finally, among other clarifying revisions to the fee regulations, the rule describes the fees and statements required of gaming operations that cease operations. The fee rate must be sufficient to generate income to fund the annual operation of the Commission, and to maintain a transition balance for the upcoming year's operation. Each gaming operation within the jurisdiction of the Commission must self-administer the provisions of 25 C.F.R. Part 514, and report and pay any fees that are due to the Commission quarterly.

Maintenance of the transition balance is essential to the fiscal integrity of the Commission because the unique statutory provisions governing the Commission's funding subject it to significant cash flow variations. Unlike other Federal agencies, the Commission's authorizing legislation does not provide for full funding at the beginning of each fiscal year. Instead, the Commission receives quarterly payments equal to approximately one quarter of each gaming operation's projected annual fee assessment. The carryover transition balance is necessary to cover the first and second quarter of operation until the fees are actually received and credited to the operating account. For example, fees collected on or before the December 31, 2020 due date will provide the operational capital for the first three months of calendar year 2021. The Commission attempts to maintain a transition balance to fund the first two quarters of the new year in order to absorb any cash flow variations that may occur.

FY 2021 Budget

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL INDIAN GAMING COMMISSION**

Narrative Summary Statement

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) established the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) as an independent Federal regulatory agency within the Department of the Interior. The purpose of the IGRA and the NIGC is to support and promote tribal economic development, self-sufficiency and strong tribal governments through the operation of gaming on Indian lands. The Commission collaborates with Tribes to monitor and regulate gaming activities conducted on Indian Lands to ensure that gaming operations are conducted with integrity and that Tribes are the primary beneficiaries of gaming revenues. IGRA authorizes the Commission to assess and collect fees on tribal gaming revenues to cover agency operating costs.

Summary of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

Permanent Appropriation

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, as amended, established the National Indian Gaming Commission to monitor and participate in the regulation of gaming conducted on Indian lands. The NIGC's operational costs are financed through annual assessments of gaming operations regulated by the Commission.

All costs associated with the Commission's operation during fiscal year 2021 will be derived from fees assessed on, and collected from, the regulated Indian gaming industry. The Commission will continue its consultation with the affected tribes and evaluate their input prior to implementing the proposed budget. The revenue to be collected in 2021 will assure funding to address the full-year impact of new hires. The Commission will continue to maintain a carryover balance sufficient to assure that cash flow variations do not impact ongoing operations. Fees are paid quarterly, based on each gaming operation's assessable gross revenue. This system often results in cash flow variations, and therefore a transition balance, derived from prior year funds carried forward to the new fiscal year, is essential for continuity of operations.

The agency's actual employee count was 110 at the end of 2019 (113 total compensable full-time equivalents) and projected to be 135 at the end of 2020 and 2021. NIGC is forecasting full-year obligation for its gaming activity of \$25 million for both fiscal year 2020 and 2021. This will allow the Commission to hire additional local and field personnel to implement its responsibilities under the Act. These funds will also be used to upgrade and improve the NIGC's information management system and expand technical assistance and training.

Reimbursable Expenses

The National Indian Gaming Commission conducts background investigations of individuals and entities with a financial interest in, or management responsibility for, potential management contracts. Tribes may also submit fingerprint cards to the Commission for processing by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Commission may charge a fee to process fingerprint cards on behalf of the Tribes. The Commission is reimbursed from the potential contractors to conduct these background investigations and also for fingerprint processing costs.

Fee Regulation

The regulations implementing the legislative provisions governing the collection of fees allow the Commission to collect the statutory maximum allowed by Congress:

§514.14 Annual Fees

(a) The total amount of all fees imposed during any fiscal year shall not exceed the statutory maximum imposed by Congress. The Commission shall credit pro-rata any fees collected in excess of this amount against amounts otherwise due.

Additionally, in January 2018, NIGC regulations were amended to specifically address the collection of fees for fingerprint processing:

§ 514.15 May tribes submit fingerprint cards to the NIGC for processing?

Tribes may submit fingerprint cards to the Commission for processing by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Commission may charge a fee to process fingerprint cards on behalf of the tribes.

§ 514.16 How does the Commission adopt the fingerprint processing fee?

(a) The Commission shall review annually the costs involved in processing fingerprint cards and, by a vote of not less than two of its members, shall adopt the fingerprint processing fee no later than November 1st of each year.

(b) The Commission shall publish the fingerprint processing fee in a notice in the Federal Register.

(c) The fingerprint processing fee shall be based on fees charged by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and costs incurred by the Commission. Commission costs include Commission personnel, supplies, equipment costs, and postage to submit the results to the requesting tribe.

§ 514.17 How are fingerprint processing fees collected by the Commission?

(a) Fees for processing fingerprint cards will be billed monthly to each tribe for cards processed during the prior month. Tribes shall pay the amount billed within forty-five (45) days of the date of the bill.

(b) The Chair may suspend fingerprint card processing for a tribe that has a bill remaining unpaid for more than forty-five (45) days.

(c) Remittances and other communications about fingerprint processing fees shall be sent to the Commission by the methods provided for in the rates of fees notice published in the Federal Register.

Authorization:

Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Public Law 100-497, as amended.

Objectives:

To regulate and monitor gaming conducted on Indian lands and to protect Indian gaming as a means of generating tribal revenues.

Program Activities:

The Commission's mission is to work within the framework created by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) for the regulation of gaming activities conducted by sovereign Indian tribes on Indian lands to fully realize IGRA's goals: (1) promoting tribal economic development, self-sufficiency and strong tribal governments; (2) maintaining the integrity of the Indian gaming industry; and (3) ensuring that tribes are the primary beneficiaries of their gaming activities. To effect these goals, the Commission is authorized to carry out training and technical assistance; conduct investigations; undertake enforcement actions, including the issuance of notices of violation, assessment of civil fines, and issuance of closure orders; approve management contracts; and issue such regulations as necessary to meet its responsibilities under the Act.

The Act grants broad authority to the Commission and provides authority to the Chair to:

- issue temporary closure orders⁵
- levy civil fines, of up to \$53,524 per violation per day, against a tribe, management contractor, or individual operator for violation of the Act, the regulations or a tribal gaming ordinance⁶
- approve tribal gaming ordinances⁷
- approve gaming management contracts⁸
- appoint and supervise staff⁹

The Commission as a whole is empowered to:

- monitor gaming activities¹⁰
- inspect gaming premises¹¹

⁵ 25 U.S.C. 2705(a)(1).

⁶ 25 U.S.C. § 2705(a)(2). Pursuant to the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015 (Sec. 701 of P. L. 114-74), the original civil penalty amount of \$25,000 is adjusted annually.

⁷ 25 U.S.C. § 2705(a)(3).

⁸ 25 U.S.C. § 2705(a)(4).

⁹ 25 U.S.C. § 2707.

¹⁰ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(b)(1).

¹¹ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(b)(2).

- conduct background investigations¹²
- inspect records relating to gaming¹³
- approve the annual budget¹⁴
- adopt regulations for the assessment and collection of civil fines¹⁵
- adopt a schedule of annual fees¹⁶
- issue permanent closure orders¹⁷
- adopt regulations as deemed appropriate to implement the provisions of IGRA¹⁸
- issue subpoena and conduct depositions¹⁹
- issue and rescind certificates of self-regulation²⁰

In carrying out its responsibilities, the Commission also:

- maintains and enhances relationships with other Federal agencies and partner governments
- provides education, training and technical assistance regarding applicable statutory and regulatory requirements
- assists tribes with background investigations and fingerprint processing
- receives and processes appeals²¹
- conducts formal and informal hearings
- consults with Indian tribes
- engages with states and the regulated community
- defends against lawsuits challenging the Commission's actions
- issues advice and guidance through bulletins, advisory opinions and other publications
- provides audits and other evaluative services

¹² 25 U.S.C. § 2706(b)(3).

¹³ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(b)(4).

¹⁴ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(a)(1).

¹⁵ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(a)(2).

¹⁶ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(a)(3).

¹⁷ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(a)(5).

¹⁸ 25 U.S.C. § 2706(b)(10).

¹⁹ 25 U.S.C. § 2715.

²⁰ 25 U.S.C. § 2710(c).

²¹ 25 U.S.C. §§ 2705(a), 2706(a)(5), 2713(a)(2).

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL INDIAN GAMING COMMISSION
EMPLOYEE COUNT BY GRADE OR GRADE EQUIVALENT**

	2019 Actual	2020 Estimate	2021 Estimate
EX-IV	0	1	1
EX-V	2	2	2
AD-00	0	0	0
ES-4	0	0	0
ES-3	0	0	0
ES-1	0	0	0
GS-15	15	18	18
GS-14	20	24	24
GS-13	47	59	59
GS-12	13	12	12
GS-11	3	5	5
GS-10	1	2	2
GS-09	1	2	2
GS-08	0	0	0
GS-07	8	10	10
GS-06	0	0	0
GS-05	0	0	0
Total Employee Count	110	135	135

In accordance with the Act, appointments are made without regard to the provisions of Title 5, U.S. Code governing appointments in the competitive services

GPRC Information

Government Performance and Results Act Information

In 2006, Congress amended the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, 25 U.S.C. §§ 2701 – 2721, Pub. L. 100-497, and for the first time made the National Indian Gaming Commission subject to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), Pub. L. 103-62. That obligation is set out at 25 U.S.C. § 2706(d)(1), which states: “In carrying out any action under this chapter, the Commission shall be subject to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.”

GRPA requires that an agency’s “strategic plan shall be updated and revised at least every four years.” 5 U.S.C. § 306(b). Consistent with this obligation and the Commission’s vision of adhering to principles of good government, including transparency to promote agency accountability and fiscal responsibility, the NIGC followed the consultation requirements set forth in the GPRA, Executive Order 13175 “Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments,” the National Indian Gaming Commission Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes, and guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The NIGC recognizes the importance of tribal consultation in formulating policy and maintaining the government-to-government relationship with tribal nations. To engage with tribal leaders in formulating the strategic plan, the NIGC sent written notice of the availability of the draft strategic plan and held a webinar to present and hear comments on it, followed by a comment period of more than a month. In addition, tribal input received during preceding consultation sessions related to the subject matter was taken into consideration. The NIGC also engaged with the public by posting the draft strategic plan for comment to the NIGC website. All relevant comments and feedback received during the webinar, in-person tribal consultations sessions, and from the public were taken into consideration in the strategic plan.

The strategic plan for fiscal years 2018-2022 was published in February 2018. The strategic plan focuses on sustained support of the goals and intent of the IGRA through continuous collaborative partnerships, communication, training efforts, outreach, technical assistance and sound decision making with Federal agencies, tribal leaders, and regulators in the industry. This strategic plan updates and supersedes the fiscal years 2014 – 2018 plan.

Summary and Highlights of Commission Activities

During FY 2019, the Commission's five primary goals arising from its 2018 Strategic Plan consisted of (1) protecting against gamesmanship; (2) maintaining a strong workforce both within the agency as well as with NIGC's tribal regulatory partners; (3) leveraging reliable and emerging industry technology trends to support tribal economic development and self-sufficiency; (4) developing and executing a rural outreach plan; and (5) achieving operational excellence. As such, during the past fiscal year, the Commission accomplished the following goals and tasks.

- The Commission continued its emphasis on working with tribal, state, and Federal regulators to ensure effective coordination in the regulation of Indian gaming, working with tribes to ensure compliance with IGRA, and taking enforcement action for violations of IGRA when necessary.
- The agency implemented appropriate steps to address employee engagement. Based on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results, 46 areas were identified as strengths and one area as a challenge. The agency has identified opportunities to improve such as: cross-agency communication from management, meaningful recognition of differences in individual pay and performance, and accurate assessment of employee training needs.
- The agency met National Archives and Records Administration standards for electronic record management and is on schedule to meet records management priorities.
- The Office of General Counsel advised the Chair and Commission on 3 management contracts, 50 tribal ordinance submissions, and litigation. Additionally, the Office of General Counsel assisted and brought stability to the tribal gaming industry by offering opinions on a variety of matters including 10 game classifications, 9 Indian land status, and 42 financing or other agreements to ensure they do not implicate management or sole proprietary interest concerns.
- Commission staff continued to offer training and technical assistance to gaming tribes regarding regulatory changes.
- The Commission continued the process of focusing its training activities and agency resources by identifying partnerships, improving training offerings, and utilizing technology to more effectively reach intended audiences. The Commission saw a 263% increase in training participants in 2019 with the continued implementation and expansion of virtual training class rooms for most of the trainings offered at Regional and National Training events.
- Commission auditors performed ten Internal Control Assessments (ICA) of gaming operation's Minimum Internal Control Standards (MICS) audits, twenty-two ICA follow-ups, two onsite Internal Audit/NIGC fee reviews, and 501 reviews on audited financial statements. The audit findings were included in reports delivered to the

audited tribes. The Commission will offer technical assistance to the tribes in identifying and implementing remedial action.

- Commission staff continued to diligently review management contracts. Three management contracts were approved by the Chairman in FY 2019.
- The Commission continued to conduct financial background investigations on persons and entities associated with management contractors. The Commission received 34 applications for background investigations in FY 2019.
- The Commission processed approximately 298,370 actions including dissemination of fingerprint cards to and from the FBI and name checks for tribal gaming commissions.
- The Commission, through its Compliance Division, addressed potential non-compliance through its standardized regulatory processes, analyzed tribal gaming facilities and created a compliance plan that in part ensured at least one site visit was completed at every tribal gaming facility. The Compliance Division completed 569 site visits, 135 internal audit checklists, 391 licensing on site reviews and completed 63 trainings events with 355 courses to 13,496 participants.
- The Commission, through its Technology Division, completed 13 Information Technology Vulnerability Assessments in FY 2019, implemented updated antivirus security and installed a modern backup system for agency file backups and disaster recovery.

During FY 2020, the Commission will continue its five goals by working on the following tasks.

- The Commission continues to offer training and technical assistance, and enforcement when necessary, to help facilitate compliance throughout all regions.
- The Commission continues to build upon relationships with tribal, Federal, and state regulatory and/or law enforcement agencies.
- Rural outreach and protecting against gamesmanship on the backs of tribes continue to be a focus for the agency's various divisions.
- The Commission continues to review and update its regulations to maintain the integrity of Indian gaming. The Commission will continue to consult with tribes as part of its regulatory review.
- The Office of General Counsel continues to advise the Chair and Commission on management contracts, tribal ordinance submissions, and litigation. Additionally, the Office of General Counsel continues to assist and bring stability to the tribal gaming industry by offering opinions on a variety of matters including game classifications, Indian land status, and whether financing or other agreements implicate management or sole proprietary interest concerns.
- The Commission continues to work on drafting, or revising, and adopting additional internal agency policies.

- The Commission continues to respond to requests from tribes for technical assistance and increases both the amount and breadth of technical assistance provided. It utilizes all forms of training forums and locations to better reach targeted audiences being mindful of Commission and tribal financial resources. The Commission continues to provide training to tribes within all eight NIGC regions. The Commission continues to update the training catalog as necessary.
- The Commission is continuing efforts to modernize the NIGC IT network to improve and maintain reliability and manageability. This includes continuing to update the website to provide the end user with ease of navigation and searchability of NIGC resources. Also, the Technology Division plans to redesign the current NIGC Fingerprint program and Tribal Access Portal (TAP) application to provide better security and usability for our tribal partners.
- The Commission will continue to improve its operational efficiency by working toward fully transitioning to newly approved electronic record schedules and by leveraging its ongoing IT upgrades to further enhance the stability, security and efficiency of the Commission's records management processes.
- The Commission will continue to track technological developments in the industry to ensure the Commission provides up-to-date technical assistance, maintains current regulations, meets its oversight responsibilities, and otherwise performs its statutory mandates.
- The Commission continues to work on its everyday tasks, including:
 - performing internal control assessments specific to Class II gaming operations.
 - performing IT vulnerability assessments as a service for tribal gaming operations to protect against IT threats.
 - responding to requests from tribal gaming operators and regulators for IGRA and gaming related training and technical assistance.
 - working with tribes on the Tribal Access Portal, a database that enables tribal gaming regulators who are engaged in issuing gaming licenses to check whether a license applicant has a licensing history with any other gaming tribe. Along with information provided by the NIGC/FBI fingerprint submission service, the TAP system helps tribes complete their own comprehensive background investigation of prospective license applicants.
 - updating its database with accumulated financial data from the gaming operations' audited financial statements and Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) report filings. The Commission establishes fee rates utilizing this data.
 - performing internal audits of NIGC departments to increase the Commission's efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance with Federal regulations.
 - reviewing management contracts and amendments to management contracts.

- processing fingerprint cards for tribal gaming employees as they are submitted by the tribal gaming commissions and tracking payment for fingerprint processing.
- continuing to respond to technical assistance requests from tribal governments and tribal regulators, in particular, assisting tribes that are considering entering the Indian gaming arena or have recently opened a new Indian gaming facility.

As part of its program objectives for FY 2021, the Commission plans to:

- Enhance relationships with partner governments and sister agencies.
- Continue to take steps to achieve the NIGC Performance Goals as identified in the Strategic Plan.
- Continue efforts to modernize the NIGC IT network to improve and maintain reliability and manageability. This includes increasing cyber security protocols to protect agency data and enhancing budget tracking tools.
- Monitor strategic plan performance measures.
- Continue its regulatory review and implement its new and/or revised regulations, and provide training to tribes on compliance with any new requirements.
- Continue to review management contracts and tribal ordinance submissions.
- Continue, through its Office of General Counsel, to offer opinions on a variety of matters including game classifications, Indian land status, and whether financing or other agreements implicate management or sole proprietary interest concerns.
- Continue the development of the Commission's internal administrative and personnel manual, and develop and implement corresponding training programs.
- Continue to inform the public about the Commission's activities through various media and training resources.
- Coordinate and provide training events to tribal entities in each of the eight regions.
- Continue to respond to requests from tribes for technical assistance, and increase both the amount and breadth of technical assistance provided, updating the training catalog as necessary.
- Utilize all forms of training forums and locations to better reach targeted audiences and save Commission and tribal financial resources.
- Continue to perform and grow knowledge reviews to examine how effective the agency's training program is to achieve compliance.
- Continue to perform internal control assessments, IT vulnerability assessments, and other types of compliance reviews to maintain the integrity of gaming industry.
- Continue to implement the requirements of GPRA.

- Continue to update information systems to ensure compliance with the receipt of personal identifiable information.
- Maintain a consistently high level of compliance for the submission of gaming activity fees and external year-end audits through continued monitoring and contact with gaming tribes, with an emphasis on compliance.
- Continue to enhance internal records management.
- Continue to monitor the training and employee development program in order to attract and retain highly-qualified personnel. The agency will annually assess the skills of its employees and provide necessary training.
- Continue to track technological developments in the industry to ensure the Commission provides up-to-date technical assistance, maintains current regulations, meets its oversight responsibilities, and otherwise performs its statutory mandates.
- Promote the self-determination goals of IGRA through administration and promotion of the law's self-regulation provisions.
- Continue to support Indian country-wide efforts to promote awareness around public safety priorities.