

Census of Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies

Gathering Crime and Justice Data to Support Safer Communities

The 2019 Census of Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies (CTLEA) will be conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the statistical agency for the U.S. Department of Justice. The CTLEA will collect information from all tribal law enforcement agencies serving federally recognized tribes and will provide a detailed picture of tribal law enforcement. This information will provide tribal, federal, state, and local governments with improved crime and justice data to inform policy making and support safer communities.

The Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 mandates that BJS “establish and implement such tribal data collection systems as the BJS Director determines to be necessary.” BJS is working with NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and IACP’s Indian Country Law Enforcement Section (ICLES) to develop the CTLEA survey and data collection protocols. BJS’ goal for the CTLEA is to implement a re-occurring tribal law enforcement focused data collection program to study the administration and operational characteristics of tribal law enforcement agencies in the U.S.

Why is the CTLEA important?

This is the first BJS survey that focuses specifically on tribal law enforcement agencies. It will provide vital information to tribal justice agencies, state and local agencies, policy makers, and the general public about the services tribal agencies provide and the needs and obstacles they face in their efforts to serve their communities. The results of the CTLEA survey will provide valuable information to tribal leaders and law enforcement agencies by:

- helping tribal justice agencies educate and inform others about their work
- providing quantitative information to measure crime on tribal land
- providing baseline and trend information on the changing environment and issues facing tribal law enforcement agencies
- describing the technological challenges that tribal law enforcement agencies face
- informing national, state, and local policymakers on the needs of tribal law enforcement agencies for staffing.

What data will CTLEA collect?

CTLEA will collect information from the agencies on their administrative structure, responsibilities, operations, and resources. The surveys will also collect information to help us better understand the obstacles tribal law enforcement agencies face when providing services.

Questions cover the following topics:

- staffing
- training and certification
- funding sources
- workload, including arrests and calls for service
- equipment
- technology uses and needs
- data sharing with other tribal, local, state and federal agencies
- emerging crime and justice problems

How were the CTLEA survey questions developed?

CTLEA staff drafted potential survey questions and then sought input from a panel of tribal leaders, justice experts, and tribal law enforcement agencies, as well as from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other federal agencies.

As part of the survey development, CTLEA project staff convened a tribal law enforcement expert panel that included representatives from 18 tribal police departments as well as representatives from Alaska Native Villages, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the FBI’s Indian country law enforcement section, and other DOJ offices. The panel gathered input on information needs and survey content. CTLEA staff then conducted a pilot test to ensure that agency representatives could easily understand and complete the survey.

During 2018, twenty tribal law enforcement agencies were invited to complete the draft version of the CTLEA survey and participate in cognitive interviews. A total of 18 agencies (90%) completed the survey and 16 agency representatives provided detailed feedback during in-depth interview sessions. The interviews asked the respondents about: 1) the clarity and comprehensiveness of the questions and response options; 2) the availability of the requested information, and 3) how long the survey took the respondent to complete. Based on feedback from these informative sessions, CTLEA project staff revised the survey to add or modify response options and instructions.

When did CTLEA begin?

The CTLEA survey was mailed to 281 tribal law enforcement agencies in summer 2019.

How can you contact us?

If you have questions regarding CTLEA data collection, please contact NORC at CTLEA@norc.org.

