



Native Agriculture & Food Systems Initiative

A Program of First Nations Development Institute



FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT Prepared for the Nell Newman Foundation

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Narrative Report

Accessing healthy food is a challenge for many Native American children and families. Without access to healthy food, a nutritious diet and good health are out of reach. To increase access to healthy food, First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas support tribes and Native communities as they build sustainable food systems that improve health, strengthen food security and increase control over Native agriculture and food systems.

On May 18-19, 2015, First Nations, in partnership with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas established a working group with representatives from National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations to begin discussion on increasing access to fresh, healthy traditional foods in existing federal food programs.¹ Specifically, this working group was brought together to: 1) address emerging and ongoing concerns about federal feeding programs in Indian Country; and 2) examine how tribal producers can contribute and improve these efforts. The meeting agenda is included as Attachment A. The following individuals attended the meeting.

Name	Title and Tribe/Organization Affiliation	Location
Adae Romero	Food System Consultant	Lanai, Hawaii
Erin Shirl	Associate Director, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas	Fayetteville, Arkansas
Jackie Francke	Vice President, First Nations Development Institute	Longmont, Colorado
Jaime Prouty-Nolan	Treasurer of National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations and Comanche Nation Food Distribution Director	Lawton, Oklahoma

¹ Federal food programs include federally funded feeding programs that operate in Native communities including the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), school lunch and afterschool feeding programs and the list goes on.

Janie Hipp	Director, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas	Fayetteville, Arkansas
Mary Greene-Trottier	Director of Food Distribution Program, Spirit Lake Tribe	Fort Totten, ND
Michael Roberts	President, First Nations Development Institute	Longmont, Colorado
Raymond Foxworth	Vice President, First Nations Development Institute	Longmont, Colorado
Roxanna Newsome	Food Distribution Program Manager	Ada, Oklahoma
Tod Robertson	President of National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations and Seminole National Food Distribution Director	Seminole, Oklahoma 7

The convening was held to begin conversation on a wide array of issues, which were narrowed down into workable focus areas. These workable focus areas can be categorized into three overarching themes that resonate in many, if not all feeding programs:

- 1) Federal Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- 2) The Food and Nutrition Service Tribal Survey
- 3) Traditional Foods (from sources to procurement, research to federal food program item listings).

Given that these topics are intertwined, the group largely focused on the FDPIR program, specifically ways to improve access to traditional and quality foods.

With the generous support of the Nell Newman Foundation, First Nations was able to provide all accommodations for the meeting attendees and devote staff time to meeting preparation including research on federal feeding programs and printing of meeting materials.

Outcomes of the Meeting

At the meeting, the working groups decided to focus on advocating for nutrition and programmatic change within the FDPIR program. In collaboration with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas and the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations, the group decided to host a tribal listening session at the 2015 National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations held in Albuquerque, NM, June 15-18, 2015. The tribal leader listening session was held on the morning of June 15, 2015 and was attended by ten tribal leaders and USDA representatives including Kevin W. Concannon (Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services in the United States Department of Agriculture).

First Nations and partners held a briefing dinner on June 14, 2015 and the following ten issues were identified as priority areas for discussion by tribal leaders and presented to USDA representatives at the June 15 listening session:

1. Food Availability

In the recent government shutdown, the FDPIR sites saw an increase in participation. We request FNS work as transparently as possible with us to ensure we do not have people going hungry in our 275 tribal communities. Our program serves over half all federally recognized tribes and we need to make sure that the coming changes in the SNAP program do not impact our ability to feed our people. We are sure you do not want that outcome either. But in the vein of a "lean warehouse" policy and the coming decline in participation in SNAP, we believe we are the canary in the coal mine in Indian Country and we seek your assistance and support to make sure children and elders are fed.

2. Lean Warehouse Policy

We are deeply concerned about what could be a shift in policy to a "lean warehouse" concept and are concerned that if, in fact, FNS has shifted to such a policy, that no one discussed this matter with our leadership in the spirit of tribal consultation specifically important to this critical feeding program in Indian Country. We request a special meeting and a written response to these concerns and a full explanation of what a "lean warehouse" concept will mean for practical purposes within the FDPIR program.

3. Status Report -FDPIR Study

We request an immediate in-person meeting between FNS, FDPIR federal staff and the NAFDPIR board and leadership to discuss this study and report. We invite representatives of the Urban Institute to take part in such a meeting. Without our input we don't believe a solid report can be delivered. Paying people to complete a survey will ensure that biased input is received and the study managers are paying individuals within our communities to provide input. We (as a board) would appreciate providing input on the actual survey and we believe that a survey design and process design delivered without our input will result in a biased outcome and report. It is not too late to fix this process and we are not requesting that the contract be rejected or even modified. What we do believe is that NAFDPIR needs to have a voice in the project, know the status in real time, have an opportunity to provide input to the survey designers, and have an opportunity to review and provide comment to any draft of a report to FNS and/or Congress before that report is made final.

Continued Concerns: Late Deliveries, BIUB Dating, Shipments of Unusable Product and Creation of a Formal Complaint Mechanisms.

We request FNS take immediate steps to do the following: 1) ensure that the national warehouse deliveries are made in a timely manner; 2) ensure that companies delivering product are not allowed to deliver unusable product to our feeding sites; 3) ensure that the value of those foods is recouped into the FDPIR budget so that we can order and receive food in a timely manner for use by Indian people. We request a meeting and written response to this issue and we strongly request that should you determine that the fault lies with the companies who are under contract with you to deliver food to our sites, that you take immediate steps to release those companies from their contracts with the federal government or take immediate steps to cure these deficiencies.

4. Matching Funds Requirements

FDPIR intends to approach Congress to seek legislative language to relieve us from the match requirement. We request USDA/FNS join us in this request. At present, ITOs do not receive enough administrative funding to fulfill their needs in managing these important feeding programs. The programs need to be funded at 100% administrative costs to deliver the program and thereby meet the needs of individual ITOs that can be vastly different, tribe-to-tribe. The federal government is adopting new policies in 638 programs government-wide to ensure that tribes recover full administrative costs in their management of programs. Ensuring FDPIR is in line with these new developments is important.

5. Support for More Funds for Tribal Nutrition Education

Finally, for too long the FDPIR program has been ineligible to seek and obtain funds from the full array of nutrition education programs available throughout the United States through USDA. Using the scant \$1 million or less available to us, we have designed and delivered a strong portfolio of nutrition education projects. But the nutrition and health conditions in Indian Country are so profoundly more epidemic than the rest of the country that it simply makes no sense to cut our programs off from access to the full portfolio of nutrition education funds available. Tribes have demonstrated over and over again that we are best at educating our own people about the choices they make when we do so from within, using traditional and culturally appropriate approaches and language. We need your help to make sure these doors are unlocked. That can be accomplished through ensuring Tribal governments and Tribal colleges have access to nutrition education programs in which they are currently ineligible to participate.

6. Carry Forward Policy

We request that FNS amend its carry forward policy with regard to operating budgets of the entire FDPIR program. NAFDPIR has passed several resolutions seeking changes to the federal funds carry forward policy. At present the ITOs lack federal permission to allow the carry forward of unused funds year to year. If carry forward of funds were allowed, the funds could be redirected with federal approval to improve program food delivery infrastructure or provide additional much needed nutrition education. We request FNS provide a plan for amending this carry forward policy.

7. Outdated Ordering Systems

We request that FNS, as part of Secretary Vilsack's ongoing and important efforts to bring modern technology advancements to USDA as well as his efforts to bring "Lean Six Sigma" business management efficiencies into the department, take a strong look at the possibilities of having Tribal technology departments provide input and insight on how best the systems used in feeding programs can be upgraded. We have several Tribal governments that are highly advanced in technology adoption, several Tribes that have technology contracts with the federal government, and many Tribal governments that have adopted the principles of Lean Six Sigma into their own operations. It seems to us that a unique partnership could be forged between these Tribes and USDA to ensure that programs with authority to only serve Tribal citizens are operated in the most efficient manner possible, and in so doing, create models for other programs within the department. NAFDPIR offers to put USDA and FNS officials in touch with these professionals within Indian Country and do whatever we can to

further this concept. At a minimum, the AIS, WBSCM and FFAVORS programs should be reviewed as a whole to determine the ability to roll all these duplicative programs into one overarching program, thus reducing redundancy, waste, and technological inefficiencies.

8. Traditional Foods in the FDPIR Package

The 2014 Farm Bill had two provisions drawing attention to the importance of traditional foods. We request your attention to ensuring that traditional foods have a permanent place in the FDPIR package and ask that you set up a special team within FNS and USDA, to include a member of the USDA Office of Tribal Relations staff (which was made permanent in this Farm Bill). We also respectfully request that this special team have several members of the NAFDPIR leadership and membership that are representative of the vast array of traditional foods sources available in Indian Country. We suggest that this activity could also be one of the components considered by the Multiagency Task Force mandated by Section -1205 of the Agricultural Act of 2014.

In addition, we request that FNS award the \$1 million authorized for the traditional foods study to an entity with intimate knowledge of the FDPIR program and that the study itself be designed in such a way that we do not repeat the problems associated with the current FDPIR study being conducted by the Urban Institute as discussed below. We know there are several entities that have unique and informed knowledge of Indian Country, both in terms of knowledge of the consumer in Indian Country, the producer in Indian Country, the culture surrounding traditional foods, and the challenges and opportunities in this arena. These entities know Indian Country and have the integrity and academic professionalism to provide a unique opportunity to further Indian Country's overarching goals of improving the Native food and agriculture sector and our ability to feed our people.

9. Support for Tribal Management of All Feeding Programs

We also point to the provisions in the new Farm Bill that give support to the possibility of turning full management of ALL feeding programs under FNS authority to Tribal governments where appropriate. The 275 Tribal governments who regularly manage FDPIR programs, and other Tribal governments who manage a vast array of other government services have more than demonstrated their capacity, interest and expertise to manage feeding our own people. NAFDPIR stands ready to play a role when such decisions are made and studies are conducted so that we can pave the way for a new partnership between Tribal governments and USDA in these critical areas to our people—nutrition and health and food. We also believe that Tribal governments who do step forward to manage those programs can do so in a seamless and cooperative way with the State governments operating feeding programs off tribal lands.

10. Traditional Foods Availability in Indian Country Public Institutions

We request that USDA FNS actively seek and obtain seat(s) for NAFDPIR leadership and membership on a special team made up of members of the USDA and FDA staff responsible for implementing this provision of the new 2014 Farm Bill. We believe that FDPIR program managers and leadership have unique insight into how this provision of the Farm Bill will evolve and we strongly believe that a work team without FDPIR presence will exclude an important voice with experience on the ground in food purchasing, positioning, feeding, and

health/nutrition planning and education in Indian County. An effort to implement this section of the new Farm Bill without a seat at the table for our program managers who confront on a daily basis the needs of our people for food would be a tragic oversight.

After this 2015 meeting, the working group in collaboration with Lieutenant Governor of the Chickasaw Nation Jefferson Keel, pushed for another face-to-face meeting between USDA representatives and tribal leaders so that tribal leaders could brief the federal government on the status of the FDPIR program. This meeting took place on February 23, 2016 in Washington, D.C. Members of the working groups attended and brought two food scientists to discuss new science related to the FDPIR food package. First Nations and other working group members also developed briefing books for all tribal leaders. The following tribal leaders and USDA representatives attended the meeting.

Name and Title	Affiliation
Chairman Vernon Miller	Omaha Tribe of Nebraska
Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel	Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma
President Russell Begay	Navajo Nation
Governor James Mountain	Pueblo of San Ildefonso
Krista Harden, Deputy Secretary	USDA
Michael Scuse, Acting Deputy Secretary	USDA
Kevin Concannon, Undersecretary	USDA
Leslie Wheelock, Director of the Office of Tribal Relations	USDA

At the meeting with USDA representatives, tribal leaders wanted to secure a commitment to develop a working group on the FDFPIR package. To this date, no such working group has been formed. The working group continues to meet and develop ways to support the FDPIR program. In fact, in May 2016, First Nations was awarded a \$475,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation to support access to nutrition education for under-resourced FDPIR programs. First Nations plans to also release the briefing report titled *Working Group on the Federal Feeding Program in Indian Country* as soon as all working group members agree to the release. A draft copy of the report is included as Attachment B.

Next Steps

First Nations and the working group will continue to work on increasing access to healthy, traditional and quality foods in the FDPIR program. The working group is set to meet again in June or July 2016 to discuss next course of action.



Working Group to Address Emerging and Ongoing Indian Country Concerns Regarding Federal Feeding Programs, Traditional Foods, Tribal Producers' Foods in Feeding Programs, and Feeding and Nutrition Program Management

Meeting Dates and Times: May 18, 2015 (9a-5p) and May 19, 2015 (9a-12p)

Meeting Location: First Nations Development Institute » 2432 Main Street, 2nd Floor » Longmont, CO

Travel Logistics: Please plan to arrive on May 17, 2015 and depart the evening of May 19 or on May 20.

Hotel: The Spring Hill Suites » 1470 Dry Creek Dr » Longmont, CO » (303) 682-2894

Please book under the First Nations room block at \$139/night.

Meeting Goals

First Nations Development Institute and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas School of Law invites you to a meeting of food systems thought leaders in Indian Country. This meeting will be a small working group discussion on several key issues according to the following draft agenda items.

Agenda

DAY 1

May 18, 2015
9a-5p

- ◆ Overview of status of federal feeding programs in Indian Country, including Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- ◆ Discussion of Upcoming Feeding Program Management Survey to be released by USDA
- ◆ Discussion on increasing access to fresh, healthy and traditional local foods into feeding programs and institutional settings in Indian Country
- ◆ Supply chain management concerns and logistics concerns regarding food distribution
- ◆ Reviews of needs and desires of tribal producers and tribal consumers (what do we know)

DAY 2

May 19, 2015
9a-12p

- ◆ Discussion of follow-on aspects of discussions and action items
- ◆ Discussion of upcoming legislation critical to these discussions
- ◆ Discussion of partners in the goal of increasing healthy food and traditional and tribal foods in feeding programs
- ◆ Discussion of emerging policy issues that will impact tribal food programs and food production
- ◆ Other topics

We will manage these topics giving equal time to each of the topics above throughout the meeting. Please direct all questions to: A-dae Romero-Briones, vena.adae@gmail.com or Erin Shirl, eshirl@uark.edu. Please direct all questions about limited travel scholarships to First Nations Development Institute A-dae Romero-Briones, vena.adae@gmail.com.