



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FRAMING PAPER:
TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE USDA DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION PLAN

Consultation #1: October 14, 2025

Hybrid Consultation

In Person Address: USDA South Building

1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, D.C., 20250

In Person Registration: [Click to register](#)

Virtual Registration: [Click to register](#)

AGENDA:

2:00 PM ET TRIBAL CONSULTATION

- 1. Opening Prayer**
- 2. Introduction by USDA Consulting Official:**
 - The Honorable Stephen Alexander Vaden, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
- 3. Overview of Reorganization**
- 4. Indian Country Impacts and Benefits**
- 5. Closing**

TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE USDA DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION PLAN

Consultation #2: October 16, 2025

Hybrid Consultation

In Person Address: Embassy Suites by Hilton Denver International Airport
7001 Yampa Street, Denver, Colorado, 80249

In Person Registration: [Click to register](#)

Virtual Registration: [Click to register](#)

AGENDA:

12:00 PM MT TRIBAL CONSULTATION

- 1. Opening Prayer**
- 2. Introduction by USDA Consulting Official:**
 - The Honorable Stephen Alexander Vaden, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
- 3. Overview of Reorganization**
- 4. Indian Country Impacts and Benefits**
- 5. Closing**

TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE USDA DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION PLAN

Background

On July 24, 2025, Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins issued [Secretary Memorandum 1078-015](#): Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan. This memorandum directed the consolidation, unification, and optimization of functions within the Department of Agriculture (USDA). These actions will improve effectiveness and accountability, enhance services, and reduce bureaucracy and cost savings for the American people. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Stephen Alexander Vaden has been delegated all authorities necessary to implement the plan.

There are four key pillars to the reorganization plan:

- Principle One: Ensure the Size of USDA's Workforce Aligns with Financial Resources and Priorities
- Principle Two: Bring USDA Closer to Its Customers by Relocating Resources Outside of the National Capital Region
- Principle Three: Eliminating Management Layers and Bureaucracy
- Principle Four: Consolidate Support Functions

Principle One: Ensure the Size of USDA's Workforce Aligns with Financial Resources and Priorities

Over the last four years, USDA's workforce grew by approximately 8% and employees' salaries increased by 14.5%. Many of these salaries were funded by temporary funding. As part of this reorganization, USDA is not conducting a large-scale workforce reduction. To make certain USDA can afford its workforce, this reorganization is another step of the Department's process of reducing its workforce. Much of this reduction was through voluntary retirements and the Deferred Retirement Program (DRP), a completely voluntary tool. As of today, 15,364 individuals voluntarily elected deferred resignation. This re-alignment will be undertaken to mitigate adverse consequences to those agencies which rely upon temporary workforces that increase at different times of the year. Examples include Forest Service increases during the spring and summer months due to wildland firefighting, Agricultural Marketing Service increases due to agricultural product grading activities during harvest time, and field-based agricultural activities involving the Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area.

USDA has and will continue to fully leverage voluntary programs such as the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIPs). The Department will also leverage directed and voluntary reassignments to ensure the workforce is aligned with mission priorities. Focused and limited Reductions in Force will be implemented only if needed and only after approval by USDA's Deputy Secretary.

Principle Two: Bring USDA Closer to Its Customers by Relocating Resources Outside of the National Capital Region

The Department currently employs approximately 4,600 individuals that work within the National Capital Region (NCR). This Region has one of the highest costs of living in the country, with a

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federal salary locality rate of 33.94%. To ensure USDA is located closer to the people it serves while achieving savings to the American taxpayer, USDA will relocate much of its Agency headquarters and NCR staff from the Washington, D.C. area to five hub locations. The selection of these hub locations takes into consideration existing concentrations of USDA employees and the cost of living for USDA employees. At the conclusion of implementation, it is USDA's goal to retain no more than 2,000 employees within the NCR.

The five hub locations and current Federal locality rates are:

- 1) Raleigh, North Carolina (22.24%)
- 2) Kansas City, Missouri (18.97%)
- 3) Indianapolis, Indiana (18.15%)
- 4) Fort Collins, Colorado (30.52%)
- 5) Salt Lake City, Utah (17.06%)

In addition to these five hubs, USDA will maintain two additional core administrative support locations: Albuquerque, New Mexico and Minneapolis, Minnesota. These two locations have substantial concentrations of human resources staff that support the delivery of critical public safety functions.

USDA will continue to maintain critical service centers and laboratories, including agency service centers in St. Louis, Missouri; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Missoula, Montana.

Regarding existing facilities within the NCR:

- 1) Whitten Building: this facility will be retained as USDA's headquarters.
- 2) Yates Building: this facility will be retained for use and USDA will fully leverage available office space for USDA mission areas and staff offices.
- 3) National Agricultural Library: retained for use, and the Department will fully leverage available office space for USDA mission areas and staff offices.
- 4) South Building: this facility will be vacated.
- 5) Braddock Place: this facility will be vacated.
- 6) Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC): this facility will be vacated over multiple years to avoid disruption of critical USDA research activities.
- 7) George Washington Carver Center (GWCC): this facility will be sold or transferred upon conclusion of its use as a temporary location for USDA personnel during the re-alignment of USDA offices and personnel.

Principle Three: Eliminating Management Layers and Bureaucracy

The Department will reduce or eliminate stand-alone regional offices and other similar bureaucratic management layers. To promote coordination across USDA, regional offices and other similar management layers will be co-located in the hub locations to the greatest extent possible.

- The Agriculture Research Service will eliminate its Area Offices. Residual functions will be performed by its Office of National Programs.
- The National Agricultural Statistics Service will consolidate its 12 existing regions into five USDA Hubs over a multi-year period.

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- The Food and Nutrition Service will reduce its number of regions from seven to five and align locations with the USDA Hubs and Service Centers over a two-year period.
- The Forest Service will phase out the nine Regional Offices over the next year and implementation activities will take into consideration the ongoing fire season. The Forest Service will maintain a reduced state office in Juneau, Alaska and an eastern service center in Athens, Georgia. The current stand-alone Research Stations will be consolidated into a single location in Fort Collins, Colorado. The Forest Service will retain the Fire Sciences Lab and Forest Products Lab - the former, vital for protection from forest fires and the latter, critical for assessing market development opportunities for timber and other forest products and related industries.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service will align its regional structure with the five USDA hub locations.
- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service centers will remain at current locations as they are located in USDA hub locations.

Principle Four: Consolidate Support Functions

To reduce duplication and provide consistency across USDA, support functions will be consolidated. Mission area and agency resources will be realigned to the consolidated functions.

The Department will:

- Consolidate civil rights functions into the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, which will deliver all statutorily required civil rights functions.
- Consolidate Freedom of Information Act and related information management functions within the Office of General Counsel.
- Consolidate Legislative Affairs functions into the Office of Congressional Relations.
- To the maximum extent practicable, consolidate communication and public affairs functions within the Office of Communication.
- Eliminate the duplication and redundancy between the Office of Budget and Program Analysis and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and streamline budget and financial operations across USDA.
- Where possible and appropriate, complete information technology consolidation activities with services fully provided by the Office of the Chief Information Officer.
- Consolidate tribal relations functions within mission areas and ensure the Office of Tribal Relations delivers all statutorily required tribal relations functions.
- Consolidate human resources functions in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration (ASA). Although human resources will be consolidated, agencies will still have focused hiring support including a dedicated team for wildland firefighting hiring.
- Consolidate contracting functions in the ASA. Although contracting resources will be consolidated, dedicated teams for commodity procurement and wildland firefighting incident support will continue to exist. The Department will transfer contracting for common goods and services to the General Services Administration during FY 2026. To eliminate redundancy, the
- Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business will be reduced to a single position that focuses on statutory requirements.

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- Consolidate lease administration and management functions in the ASA.
- Consolidate grants and financial assistance to provide better controls and promote efficiency.
- This consolidation will include, where feasible, the transfer of grant making and administration functions from USDA offices and agencies that currently have limited capacity to perform such duties to other offices and agencies.
- Eliminate the redundancy in student programs in the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) by realigning OPPE student programs to ARS.

TRIBAL INPUT NEEDED:

- **Q1:** What new opportunities could the proposed reorganization create to enhance your Tribe's access to programs and services? Please share specific examples.
- **Q2:** As USDA considers consolidating locations, programs, and services, what approaches would best ensure Indian Country benefits in the most efficient and effective way? Please provide examples from your Tribe's experience.
- **Q3:** How can USDA build stronger, more consistent engagement with your Tribe through the reorganization? What specific methods or practices would you recommend?
- **Q4:** In thinking about USDA's customer service to your Tribe, what has worked well, and what improvements would make service even stronger? Please share specific examples where USDA met, or exceeded, your expectations.
- **Q5:** What structural changes would most help USDA collaborate effectively with your Tribe? Please provide suggestions of what would work best.
- **Q6:** How could Tribal liaison positions be structured to best support your Tribe's priorities? Please share ways these positions could be most effective.

Tribal Leader comments may also be submitted to the Office of Tribal Relations at Tribal.Relations@usda.gov until November 16, 2025.