

**USDA Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group (TLCWG) on FDPIR
In-Person and Virtual Meeting**

Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2025
Location: Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Annual Conference
Virgin Hotels Las Vegas
4455 Paradise Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89169
Room Sage 3
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Pacific Time)

- I. Welcome and Opening Remarks
 - a. Patrick Penn, Deputy Under Secretary (Consulting Official), USDA Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS)
 - b. ReNa Lohnes, Council Representative (Consulting Official), Spirit Lake Tribe, Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group (TLCWG)
 - c. James Mountain, Governor (Consulting Official), San Ildefonso Pueblo, Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group (TLCWG)
- II. Introductions – Welcome and Recognize Tribal Leaders
- III. Previous Business & Agenda-Setting
 - a. Acceptance of [April 2025 Consultation Report Out | USDA](#)
 - b. Approval of Agenda

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- I. **Contingency Funding**
 - USDA shared FDPIR program structures that help mitigate any potential shortfalls during a lapse in federal funding. USDA described its general process for purchasing USDA Foods from vendors, which includes placing and securing orders three months in advance. USDA also shared that FDPIR administrative funds have a two-year period of availability providing FDPIR programs to carry over any unused funds into the next federal fiscal year.
 - Tribal leaders expressed appreciation for the availability of funds and the benefit of two-year funding.
 - Tribal leaders expressed support for the creation of an FDPIR contingency fund and emphasized that while USDA was fortunate to use carryover funds, the absence of a contingency fund is challenging.



- Other Tribal leaders voiced concern that disruptions to programs like SNAP could lead to significant increases in FDPIR participation, straining administrative funding and capacity, especially with future potential government shutdowns.
 - Tribal leaders noted challenges when funding is not available and highlighted the importance of food availability and the need for greater visibility at the local level.
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II. Food Supply Chain Disruptions

- USDA shared that plans were implemented to stock existing warehouses and new warehouses when full-year funding was received to mitigate any supply chain disruptions largely due to increased orders during October and November timeframes when there was a lapse in appropriations and some uncertainty with SNAP benefits.
 - Tribal leaders highlighted that smaller Tribes receiving deliveries every six weeks face extended shortages if deliveries are delayed. They stressed that when food packages are unavailable, Tribes feel they are failing their communities.
 - Tribal leaders appreciated timely communication on disruptions and mitigation steps, noting increased participation in many of their programs. They emphasized that food delivery disruptions underscore the need for contingency funds and urged USDA to establish plans for mitigating shutdowns, natural disasters, and other unforeseen circumstances. They encouraged USDA to use flexibilities such as Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to purchase food for communities.
 - Tribal leaders also had a discussion with USDA about *Make America Healthy Again* (MAHA) and reforms to reduce unprocessed foods noting USDA's collaboration with Health and Human Services (HHS) and alignment with upcoming Dietary Guidelines.
 - USDA reaffirmed its commitment to offering nutritious foods in the food package, noting that FDPIR's Healthy Eating Index is higher than most programs and how operational realities require offering a broad range of foods, including shelf-stable options.
 - Tribal leaders recognized and commended the individuals who managed to accomplish significant work with limited resources during these times, crediting staff at USDA headquarters and across the country for their commitment.
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III. Disaster Plan Preparedness

- FNS and Tribal leaders discussed the two types of disasters—presidentially declared disasters and situations of distress—and explained how each type operates within FDPIR.
- Tribal leaders noted that disasters can be natural, financial, or political and cited challenges during COVID, including USDA's inability to adjust income guidelines, and described collaboration with Feeding America as a major food redistributor.



- Tribal leaders stressed that delays in funding can be challenging and urged that situations of distress receive responses quickly.
 - Tribal leaders emphasized that Tribes have the highest poverty rates in most counties and cannot access TEFAP or SNAP-Ed because these programs go through states, which do not always work well with Tribes. They urged that Tribes should not have to rely on states for access to program funds.
 - Tribal leaders noted that Tribes cannot request disaster declarations—only states can—and urged statutory changes to allow parity. FNS will follow-up with clarification on Tribes requesting disaster declarations.
 - Tribal leaders extended invitations for USDA officials to visit FDPIR sites, which were accepted.
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IV. Waivers for Veteran Participants

- Tribal leaders shared statistics on veteran participation in FDPIR and noted that more Veterans would like to participate but cannot because of VA disability and/or VA pension payments.
 - Tribal leaders and USDA discussed that these types of payments currently count toward income in FDPIR, similar to SNAP, and a rule change would be required to exclude them. USDA explained that FDPIR waiver authority is intended to mirror SNAP processes and outlined three factors for consideration.
 - Tribal leaders asked USDA whether it will seek a regulatory change to exclude both types of payments as part of FDPIR eligibility criteria, as well as the timeline for implementation. USDA responded that this is not currently on the regulatory agenda.
 - Tribal leaders pointed out federal precedent for excluding these payments, noting that HUD no longer counts them as income and VA guidance excludes them during eligibility screenings.
 - Tribal leaders emphasized that Tribal citizens have served in the military at the highest rate of any demographic and that many Tribal Veterans still experience food insecurity.
 - USDA agreed to take a closer look at the impact of Veteran payments on FDPIR eligibility with close attention to how many potential Veterans may become eligible if Veteran-related payments are excluded from income.
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V. National Warehouse Contract Update

- USDA shared that Americold Logistics, LLC and McLane Group International, L.P. are the new vendors for the national warehouse contract supporting FDPIR and CSFP.
- Tribal leaders expressed concerns about previous issues where food products were shipped without proper inspection, resulting in unfit items being delivered. They



described these challenges and requested assurances that operations will run smoothly moving forward.

- Tribal leaders suggested modernizing the process to make it as seamless as tracking a package, including real-time tracking and communication with drivers during, for example, when adverse weather conditions occur.
 - USDA representatives noted that the agency has learned valuable lessons from past supply chain disruptions and is implementing a phased approach to improve efficiency.
 - USDA shared that site visits are being conducted at the two new warehouse contractors to ensure compliance and uphold quality standards.
 - Tribal leaders expressed interest in NAFDPIR Board members touring the new warehouses to promote transparency and strengthen relationships. In follow-up discussions with the NAFDPIR Board, it was mutually agreed to revisit this request post-warehouse transition.
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VI. Other Business and Next Consultation

- Tribal leaders highlighted the success of the FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Projects and said they are a strong example of tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and self-governance, noting that foods provided through the demonstration were not affected by recent supply chain disruptions.
- Tribal leaders requested to forgo a consultation typically held in February in Washington, DC and instead hold an in-person Food Package Review Workgroup meeting.
- Tribal leaders will consider a consultation in June 2026 timeframe and follow-up with a request to USDA.