



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

## USDA TRIBAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### **Rural Development:**

USDA made significant investments in economic development, housing and infrastructure projects to benefit Tribes this year. For USDA Rural Development alone, \$290.8 million was invested to directly benefit American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN).

USDA Rural Development Business Programs guaranteed four loans to AI/AN-owned businesses. The loans provided \$30.9 million in financing. Additionally, 18 Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) (totaling \$2.7 million) and 11 Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG) (totaling \$812,000) were awarded to Tribes and tribal entities, which will help create and save AI/AN jobs. One RBOG award will be used by the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) to develop a comprehensive economic development plan for 26 Tribes in the southern and eastern United States, while the Passamaquoddy Tribe in Maine received a \$99,500 RBEG grant to establish a revolving loan fund for maple syrup businesses.

In Fiscal Year 2014 USDA Rural Development invested \$12.7 million to help Tribes finance essential community facilities including schools and clinics. Twenty-nine grants (\$4.1 million) were provided to 1994 Tribal Land Grant Colleges and Universities through the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program.

USDA loans and grants also provide much needed financing for AI/AN families to purchase and repair single-family homes. This year, AI/AN homeowners received 116 direct home loans (\$14.8 million) and 961 Single Family Housing loan guarantees (\$133.3 million). USDA also provided \$1.4 million, through 229 grants and loans to elderly and very low income AI/AN homeowners to help make safety and efficiency repairs and improvements to their homes. Through the Housing Preservation Grant program, USDA provided funding to assist tribes improve low income and elder housing in six states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah and Washington). For example, in California the Los Coyotes Band of Cahuillo and Cupeno Indians received \$50,000 to rehabilitate the homes of 15 tribal families. The Nevada Rural Housing Authority also received \$50,000 to weatherize homes in four counties, including homes of tribal members. In Washington, the Lummi Nation Housing Authority received over \$54,000 to help 24 very-low-income Tribal families rehabilitate and repair their homes.

In 2014, USDA's Telecommunications Programs provided 26 Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants totaling \$9.6 million to entities serving Tribal lands. Funding helps grantees purchase equipment to facilitate distance learning and telemedicine services. Navajo Technical College received a DLT grant of \$447,000 and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe received \$336,000 to create virtual learning and telemedicine networks that will bolster educational opportunities and facilitate AI access to specialized medical care.

USDA invested in 71 water and environmental projects benefitting Tribal communities throughout FY 2014. In total \$53.3 million directly benefitted AI/ AN. Total development cost of these projects – including funding from additional investors - totaled \$147.7 million. Nearly 57 percent of the project financing came from USDA. 18 of these projects were in Alaska and 11 were funded through the Rural Alaska Village Grant program.

This year, USDA's Electric Programs invested \$17.2 million in direct loans to rural electric utilities. This investment brought new and improved electric infrastructure to 10,086 Native American electric consumers. USDA also provided 4 High Energy Cost Grants for Tribal projects, totaling \$6.2 million. Two of these grants were awarded to the Anchorage-based Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, which serves communities in Southwest Alaska, one was provided to the Denali Commission and another was awarded to Sacred Power Corporation for projects within the Navajo Nation.

### **Additional USDA Tribal Investments:**

This week, on behalf of the White House Rural Council, six federal agencies, including USDA joined to announce 26 communities selected to participate in Local Foods, Local Places, a federal initiative providing technical support to integrate local food systems into community economic action plans. Under this effort, a team of agricultural, transportation, environmental, health, and regional economic experts will work directly with the communities to develop local food projects they proposed. Project proposals include repurposing vacant land into local food production, developing year-round retail markets for local food products, and establishing food hubs to increase local food supply chains.

Local Foods, Local Places is a partnership among USDA, EPA, Department of Transportation (DOT), ARC, the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The initiative draws on the Administration's Partnership for Sustainable Communities, USDA's Seven Strategies for Economic Development and other place-based strategies to address regional challenges. The 26 Local Foods, Local Places communities were chosen from among 316 applicants. The initiative is jointly funded at more than \$750,000.

Also this week, Secretary Vilsack announced \$9.7 million in grants to 62 community-based and non-profit organizations, and educational institutions to conduct training, outreach and technical assistance for socially disadvantaged, veteran, and tribal farmers and ranchers. Indian Tribal Organizations and land grant institutions, including 1994 Tribal Colleges and Universities, serving Indian Country received 13 of these grants, totaling over \$2 million. These awards are distributed through the Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program, also known as the "2501 Program".

Also announced by the Secretary:

- \$5.4 million loan to upgrade broadband service for residents of New Mexico's Mescalero Apache Reservation. This is the first telecommunications loan USDA has made under the Substantially Underserved Trust Area (SUTA) provision of the 2008 Farm Bill. Congress

implemented SUTA to help USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) improve Tribal infrastructure including offering Tribal borrowers lower interest rates and extended payment terms for RUS loans. It also waives some requirements that applicants provide matching funds for approved projects.

- 29 loans or grants totaling \$4.1 million to twenty-eight 1994 Land Grant Tribal Colleges through USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities program. This program provides loans and grants to construct, enlarge or improve community facilities for health care, public safety and public services.
- Partnerships between USDA and three Tribal Colleges (Oglala Lakota College, Kyle S.D.; Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, N.M.; United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck, N.D.) to provide grant writing assistance and other services to help traditionally underserved communities access federal resources as appropriate.

### **Farm Service Agency:**

In FY 2013, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provided over \$71 million in direct small business lending to 1,200 Native American-owned farming and ranching businesses. These funds were used to purchase land, equipment, and breed stock. The program assists Native American farms and ranches with their initial financing needs, providing the ability to create or enhance credit and strengthen small businesses, to improve rural economies. Additionally, the Agency guaranteed over \$35 million in commercial loans made to Native American farmers and ranchers. In the last 5 years the Agency has made or guaranteed \$470 million in assistance to Native American farmers and ranchers. Additionally, the USDA Farm Service Agency is working closely with Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund and the Native American CDFI Network to certify Native American owned CDFIs as eligible lenders for FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program. This partnership of FSA and Native CDFI's will improve access to capital for Native American farmers and ranchers.

### **Improving Nutrition for At Risk Women, Infants and Children:**

The USDA Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) serves as an adjunct to good health care for low income nutritionally at risk women, infants, and children. WIC helps participants choose and maintain a healthy lifestyle by providing supplemental foods, nutrition education and breastfeeding counseling, and referrals to health care and other social services. Currently, 34 federally-recognized Indian Tribal Organizations operate a WIC Program in the same capacity as a State. In FY 2014, these entities received a total of \$61.2 million for their WIC Programs. These funds are used to pay for the supplemental foods and nutrition services provided to WIC participants as well as administrative costs. In addition, \$1.4 million was provided to Indian Tribal Organizations to support their WIC breastfeeding peer counseling programs in FY 2014.

### **Food Distribution:**

In FY 2014, five States and 100 Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) administered the *Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations* on 276 reservations, pueblos, rancherias, and Alaska Native Villages. Nutrition assistance was provided to approximately 85,000 participants on an average monthly basis.

**National Institute for Food and Agriculture:**

USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) manages four USDA funding programs for land-grant tribal colleges and universities (TCUs): the Tribal Colleges Research Grants program, the Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants program, the 1994 Tribal Colleges Extension Services program, and the 1994 Tribal Colleges Endowment program. NIFA funds research, education, and extension programs that enable tribal colleges to recruit and retain students into the food and agricultural sciences. Graduates of these programs are better qualified to enter the workforce as healthy individuals and community problem-solvers. These programs also empower individuals and communities to increase economic opportunities and quality of life, improve nutrition and health, and protect and enhance natural resources and the environment.

In 2014, 34 TCUs with land grant status received approximately \$14.3 million in grant award funds. NIFA also provided support to the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program, funding 36 awards totaling \$2.9 million to provide essential youth development and agriculture development services at the tribal level. Together, these programs provided funds for 96 student scholarships, 119 student internships, 21 distance education programs, and 22 related projects. In addition, NIFA served approximately 54,000 youth with after school nutrition and natural resource education programs.

NIFA 1994 Land Grant Institution and Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Grant Awards – 2014:

Program Name	Amount Awarded
1994 Equity in Education:	\$3,439,000
1994 Extension Programs:	\$4,263,660
1994 Research:	\$1,678,249
Federally Recognized Tribes	
Extension:	\$2,917,440
1994 Institutions Endowment	
Fund Distribution:	\$4,882,043
Total 2014 Awards	\$17,179,732

## **Agricultural Marketing Service:**

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) works to improve opportunities for U.S. growers and producers, including those involved in local and regional food systems. In Fiscal Year 2014, AMS, through its Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program, awarded over \$27 million in competitive grants to expand direct farmer-to-consumer and intermediary local food businesses. Typical businesses that are supported by these grants are farmers markets, community supported agriculture programs, food hubs, local food aggregation facilities, local food processors, farm to institution establishments, and other local food enterprises. Of the \$27 million, approximately \$900,000 was awarded to 13 Tribal organizations across 10 states (AK, AZ, CA, CO, ME, MI, MT, NM, SD, WI).

Results: In carrying out its work to support the development and expansion of local and regional food systems, AMS has been providing technical assistance to the Oneida Nation as the Tribe works to establish a local food hub on their reservation. Specifically, AMS has provided architectural design support and consultation regarding efforts to build a Food Center that would include: (1) an entrepreneurial kitchen for community members to develop their own products for sale; a cannery for production and for community use (the main production will be traditional white corn (and its derivatives -- dehydrate, flour, pancake mix, etc.), apples from our orchard (apple chips, apple pie filling, apple butter), pickles, salsas, and jellies/jams); a Farmers' Market with multi-use space – for summer outdoor, and winter indoor; artisans, special events, etc; a community gathering space; and an aquaponic farm for a Farm to School program and educational tours. The Oneida Nation is still in the planning stages of this effort. AMS will remain engaged through their planning process.

AMS also purchases a variety of domestically produced and processed commodity food products, through a competitive process among approved vendors. These purchase activities support American agriculture by providing an outlet for surplus products and encouraging domestic consumption of domestic foods. The wholesome, high quality products, collectively called USDA Foods, are delivered to schools, food banks, and households in communities across the country and are a vital component of our nation's food safety net. Over the past year, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has assisted Kiva Sun Foods, a Native American-owned small business, in navigating the vendor application process. Those efforts recently resulted in the company's designation as an AMS-approved vendor for bison. This development is timely, given the strong desire expressed recently by recipients of commodities donated through the USDA's Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) to receive traditional Native American-produced foods in general and bison in particular.

In addition to Kiva Sun Foods, The Swinomish Fish Company, a Native American, 8(a) certified business, has become an eligible supplier of canned salmon, which is purchased mainly for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Native American Enterprises, a Native American, service-disabled veteran-owned business and 8(a) certified business, is also an eligible supplier of ground beef and beef roast. The beef roasts are mainly purchased for the USDA Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

AMS has held three Tribal consultations in 2014. The Tribal consultations focused on Farm Bill updates as well as program information that would specifically benefit Tribes. Some of those who participated in the consultations have been leaders and representatives of Tribal Farm Advocates, the San Carlos Apache Tribe, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, the White Earth Nation, the Eastern Band Cherokees of North Carolina, 1994 Colleges and Universities and the Intertribal Agricultural Council. Connected to the Tribal consultations, on May 19, 2014, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, in cooperation with the USDA Office of Tribal Relations, conducted a webinar to explain grant opportunities through the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program for Tribes.

### **Agricultural Research Service:**

The USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) continued to collaborate with Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) focusing on establishing cooperative research and employment of Native American students in Agency laboratories. ARS supported the White House Initiative on TCUs and continued to pursue goals to improve communications through information sharing and partnerships with TCUs. ARS scientists also provided numerous tours and provided mentorship for students at TCUs. Funding for TCUs equaled \$47,069.

In its outreach efforts to promote careers in agricultural science and recruit potential applicants for employment, ARS provided support to the National Society of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences, and coordinated Departmental sponsorship for Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science.

In the second quarter, the North Dakota State University (NDSU) organized leaders from agriculture, industry, and government to develop a new group to manage public and private support of the long-term research project, "Renewal on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation: Land, Cattle, Beef, and People." Sitting Bull College, NDSU, South Dakota State University, and USDA-ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory are the primary collaborators on the project. The group met at the local USDA-ARS meeting facility. The Mandan North Dakota research unit continues collaboration with NDSU, Standing Rock Indian Reservation and Sitting Bull College in a National Institute of Food and Agriculture funded grant entitled "Developing a Sustainable Forage and Natural Beef Production System on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation" (on-going project started in 2010).

ARS also sponsored an Alaskan Native female PhD candidate attending Colorado State University, who will graduate in December of 2014. ARS provided tuition and books, as well as a part time position and research project for her dissertation. She will start a Post Doc with ARS in Ames Iowa in the spring of 2015.

The USDA/1994 Tribal Scholars Program offers a combination of work experience and academic study leading to career positions within USDA through the Pathways program designed to integrate classroom study with paid work experience. ARS currently sponsors one scholar (FY 2013 funding equaled \$27,069 for tuition, fees, and books), a graduate of Salish Kootenai, and a fourth year student at Washington State University majoring in chemistry. Anticipated graduation date is December 2014. Funding for this cooperative research comes

from within the Agency's discretionary funds, and varies annually based on the availability of discretionary funding and the current research needs of ARS making it difficult to predict with any specificity in future years.

The ARS Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity Program Manager in Stoneville, Mississippi is working with the Tribal Council and the Education Division of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) with attempts to provide permanent, full-time jobs for over 5,000 Tribal-member and non-Indian employees affiliated with the MBCI. The Tribe is a major contributor to the state's economy. A meeting has been scheduled with the Chief, staff, parents and students to discuss various career opportunities in agriculture.

**USDA's Economic Research Service** released a December 1, 2014, report "Measuring Access to Healthful, Affordable Food in American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal Areas (EIB-131)," which compares distances to outlets for obtaining healthy, affordable food in tribal areas to those for the general U.S. population. For example, both American Indian and Alaska Native tribal area populations are mostly rural; as a result, only 25.6 percent of all tribal area populations were 1 mile or less from a supermarket (defined as walking distance), compared with 58.8 percent of the U.S. population. This report's findings have implications for improving the health of tribal populations.

**USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS)** provided the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) with \$680,220 under the Market Access Program (MAP) to support the Council's export market development activities around the world during Fiscal Year 2014. The funds are used by companies such as Swinomish Fish Company, Maniilaq Services, LLC, Spirit Lake, Aleutian-Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA), Ramona Farms to market products such as wild rice, seafood, and processed products in Europe, South Asia, Japan, China and Latin America. Since 2009, FAS has provided over \$4.4 million to the Council. In 2013, the IAC had considerable success introducing Native-American foods and products to countries around the world. Over the past two years, 'Maniilaq Native Alaskan' Seafood Inc., located in Kotzebue, Alaska has continued to open and expand export markets in Europe and Asia, in large part thanks to the support of the IAC which is funded by MAP. As a result of participating in Boston Seafood, Asian Seafood, and the Brussels European Seafood shows, Maniilaq made contact with over 65 potential importers, and anticipates sales of over \$550,000 in wild salmon jerky over the next 12 months.

**USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)** reached out to American Indian and Alaska Native farm and ranch operators to ensure proper representation in its Census of Agriculture program. NASS published a comprehensive 2012 Census of Agriculture American Indian Reservations publication, which provided supplemental information to the 2012 Census. NASS made data available at the tribe level, providing select operation and operator data for 76 American Indian reservations. In addition, NASS also published a document highlighting American Indian Farmers. This additional document provided data at the state level. In addition to these, NASS also published Race, Ethnicity, and Gender profiles, which provide the overview profile nationally and by state for underrepresented communities in the United States, including American Indian and Alaska Native operators.

**The Risk Management Agency (RMA)** provided \$280,223 in grants to partners to provide risk management training to Native American farmers and ranchers in 2014. The University of Arizona was awarded \$81,487.00 to provide risk management education for livestock producers in the Southwest on the Vegetative Index, the Whole Farm Revenue Program, and recordkeeping to improve the risk management skills and decisions made by Native American and other limited-resource livestock producers in Arizona and Nevada. Custom Ag Solutions was awarded \$99,274.00 to provide risk management education for beginning, livestock, and Native American producers in RMA's Oklahoma City Region. Red Stone Education was awarded \$99,462.00 to provide risk mitigation training for Lakota farmers and ranchers. The training delivered risk management education to approximately 270 tribal producers and 120 "future" tribal producers.

**Other Accomplishments:**

In the past year, the U.S. Forest Service (FS) introduced and formalized programs in support of agency/tribal partnerships. This direction will lead to at least one flagship tribal partnership in every Forest Service Region to develop and implement climate adaptation strategies for tribal lands and adjacent National Forests and Grasslands. Through increased intra- and inter-agency collaboration, these partnerships will develop new and existing opportunities to assist tribal communities in preparing for and recovering from the impacts of climate change. These partnerships will leverage an existing, coordinated effort in tribally-focused research - the Tribes and Climate Change Research Project - that incorporates traditional knowledge and western science to meet tribal natural resource needs.

The FS also developed a Tribal Research Roadmap this year - currently under final agency review - as a guide to help develop ethical and significant research partnerships that are fundamental to protecting traditional knowledge and culture, find innovative solutions to landscape scale challenges and encourage joint learning with tribes and indigenous groups on issues of common concern.

Forest Service has delivered on- ground, actionable climate science to tribes during the past year in both the Northern and Southern regions of the Nation. In the Northern Region, the Climate Change Response Framework is undertaking real-world adaptation demonstration projects and hands-on training with tribal natural resources departments on tribal lands. In the Southern Region FS scientists delivered training to tribes and contributed to a unique, multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding that will assess and preserve culturally-significant plants.

The Forest Service has been a leader in federal land management agencies in repatriation and reburials of Native American remains in partnership with Tribes and descendants. In 2013, \$143,000 was targeted for reburying human remains under the authority granted to the Forest Service through the Culture and Heritage provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill, making a large contribution toward reburying the approximately 5,000 sets of human remains repatriated through the Forest Service's compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

This year, USDA began reviewing applications for the Ombudsman position created by the *Keepseagle* Settlement. The USDA Office of Tribal Relations and the Intertribal Agriculture



Council's Regional Centers increased access to USDA programs and services for Native American farmers and ranchers, resulting in Farm Service Agency loans in excess of \$6 million and Natural Resource Conservation Service funding in excess of \$1.75 million.