



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

Date: Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Location: 2026 National Association of FDPIR (NAFDPIR) Annual Conference
Sheraton Niagara Falls
Niagara Falls, NY 14303

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Local Time (Eastern)

USDA: Willie Taylor, Deputy Administrator, Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA)

Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group Chairs: Council Representative ReNa Lohnes, Spirit Lake Tribe; Council Representative Perry Martinez, Pueblo de San Ildefonso, Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group (TLCWG)

I. Opening Prayer

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Willie Taylor, Deputy Administrator, FNA, USDA
- ReNa Lohnes, Council Representative, Spirit Lake Tribe, Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group (TLCWG)

III. Introductions – Recognition of Tribal Leaders

- Council Representatives ReNa Lohnes and Perry Martinez, TLCWG Co-Chairs
- Deputy Administrator Willie Taylor, FNA, USDA

IV. Previous Business and Agenda-Setting

- I. Acceptance of [December 2025 Consultation Report Out | USDA](#)
- II. Review and Approval of Agenda
- III. Presentation of the History of the TLCWG on FDPIR

Discussion Topics

V. Program Administration and Policy Updates Impacting FDPIR Operations

FDPIR Participation

- USDA reported continued increases in FDPIR participation and emphasized the need for programs to closely monitor local trends and maintain one to three months of USDA Foods inventory to support full food package distribution. Participation has grown from a monthly average of 58,404 participants in FY 2025 to approximately 68,577 to date in FY 2026.
- USDA highlighted that the President's FY 2027 Budget proposes increasing FDPIR funding from \$235 million in FY 2026 to \$271 million in FY 2027 to

support rising caseloads. Tribal leaders acknowledged the proposed increase and noted it could support a national caseload of 75,000. They asked about the process should participation exceed that level. USDA explained that USDA has the ability to work with Congress through midyear federal budget mechanisms if unanticipated funding needs occur beyond budget projections.

SNAP Related Discussion

- Tribal leaders referenced the *One Big Beautiful Bill of 2025* and requested USDA's definition of Native American for SNAP eligibility.
- The *One Big Beautiful Bill of 2025* adds new exceptions from the SNAP three-month time limit for Indians, also referred to as Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Indigenous Peoples, and Tribal Members.
- As described in the October 3, 2025, [implementation memo](#), the new exceptions include:
 - "An Indian" as defined in paragraph (13) of section 4 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA);
 - "An Urban Indian" as defined in paragraph (28) of Section 4 of the IHCIA; and
 - "A California Indian" as described in section 809(a) of the IHCIA.

An individual is an "Indian" per 25 U.S.C. 1603(13) if they:

- Are a member of an Indian tribe.
- Indian tribe is defined as any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or group or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. Please note, this definition of "Indian tribe" is different than the definition of "Indian tribe" at 7 CFR 271.2.;

An individual is an "Urban Indian" per 25 U.S.C. 1603(18), if they:

- Reside in an urban center and meet at least one of the following four criteria:
- Regardless of if they live on or near a reservation, is a member of a tribe, band, or other organized group of Indians, including those tribes, bands, or groups terminated since 1940 and those recognized now or in the future by the State in which they reside, or who is a descendant, in the first or second degree of any such member;
- Is an Eskimo or Aleut or other Alaska Native,
- Is determined to be an Indian for any purpose under regulations promulgated by the Secretary of Interior; or
- Is determined to be an Indian under regulations promulgated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.
- Urban center is defined as any community which has a sufficient urban Indian population with unmet health needs to warrant assistance under subchapter IV of the IHICA, as determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

An individual is a “California Indian” per 25.U.S.C. 1679(a), if they:

- Are a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe;
 - Are a descendant of an Indian who was residing in California on June 1, 1852, if such descendant—
 - Is a member of the Indian community served by a local program of the Indian Health Service; and
 - Is regarded as an Indian by the community in which such descendant lives;
 - Are an Indian who holds trust interests in public domain, national forest, or reservation allotments in California; or
 - Are an Indian of California who is listed on the plans for distribution of the assets of rancherias and reservations located within the State of California under the Act of August 18, 1958, and any descendant of such an Indian.
- Tribal leaders asked whether Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits count as income for SNAP. USDA would like to clarify here that, under federal law ([42 U.S.C. 8624\(f\)](#)), LIHEAP payments are not considered income or resources for any federal assistance program and therefore should not be counted when determining FDPIR or SNAP eligibility.
 - Tribal leaders also raised concerns about potential state cost-sharing associated with high SNAP payment error rates and asked when USDA would release updated error data. USDA noted that FY 2025 State Payment Error Rates were published on June 24, 2026: <https://www.fna.usda.gov/newsroom/usda-0082.26>

FDPIR Warehouse and Deliveries:

- USDA provided an update on new warehouse contracts—Zone 1 operated by Americold Logistics (East/Central) and Zone 2 by McLane Group International (Central/West)—and confirmed the transition is entering its final stages. USDA acknowledged disruptions during the transition, including missed or late deliveries, inappropriate driver conduct, incorrect drop-offs, and food temperature issues.
- USDA emphasized its commitment to holding contractors fully accountable for all contract terms and conditions, including adherence to scheduled deliveries and maintaining the quality and proper management of food products.
- USDA also reiterated that unprofessional conduct by delivery drivers is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Tribes are asked to report any instances of inappropriate behavior for USDA to address promptly through its oversight channels under the contracts. USDA’s complaint system of record is Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM).
- New contracts also require 98% on-time delivery and improved quality controls. USDA highlighted the importance of documenting issues through WBSCM. This is crucial to ensuring contractual requirements and commitment to tribes are upheld.
- Tribal leaders shared recent experiences with food deliveries. Tribes want to ensure they are not being held responsible for spoiled/damaged missing food in circumstances beyond their control. USDA confirmed that if spoiled/damaged

food is documented appropriately by the receiving agency at time of delivery, USDA is able to hold the vendor accountable for the value of the lost product and Tribes are not held responsible.

- USDA also emphasized the importance of tribes entering a complaint through the system of record, WBSCM.
- Tribal leaders also suggested a hotline dedicated to FDPIR issues. USDA encouraged tribes to reach out to FNA staff during business hours and noted that there is an existing hotline monitored for complaints.
- USDA Foods Complaints 800-446-6991 or USDAFoodsComplaints@usda.gov

VI. Food Package Availability, Procurement Challenges, and Vendor Stability

Inventory Management and Procurement Challenges:

- Tribal leaders expressed concern with food availability via the catalogs and requested more real time insight into food inventory at the national warehouses.
- USDA clarified that catalog discrepancies may occur when simultaneous orders deplete stock. However, WBSCM does reflect real time inventory.
- USDA shared its ordering cycle and how most USDA Foods are ordered 3 months in advance. FDPIR programs are allowed and encouraged to maintain 1–3 months of local inventory to maintain food variety and respond to participation increases.
- Tribal leaders expressed concerns regarding specific shortages of bison, tuna, and walleye.
- USDA shared the National Bison Association is reporting a nationwide Bison shortage. Regarding tuna, there is only one domestic source of tuna and gaps arise when a vendor cannot meet standards. Walleye has faced a similar procurement hurdle. USDA is working with the FDPIR Food Package Review Work Group to identify alternatives to tuna and walleye.
- Tribes requested USDA look at alternative sourcing to aid with shortages and other procurement challenges. Tribal leaders recommended USDA look at Buy American constraints, explore school food catalogs, weekly deliveries, and leverage tribal producers (via 638 authority).
- During the discussion, Tribal leaders expressed concern that the FNA reorganization will further exacerbate an already slow process of introducing and/or replacing USDA Foods for FDPIR.

VII. Funding Levels, Administrative Cost Considerations, and Program Sustainability

- USDA shared funding details included in the FY 2027 President's Budget request which includes an increase of \$36 million from FY 2026 levels to support FDPIR for a total of \$271 million in FY 2027. A large share of the increase supports food purchases to support caseload growth.
- Tribal leaders shared that growing participation also impacts administrative budgets and strains equipment (freezers, coolers, trucks). The Tribes requested

support from FNA that they can share with their leadership to support Tribal approval for administrative expenses. FNA encourages all FDPIR tribes to work closely with their Regional Offices during the budget negotiation process to ensure their budgets reflect the needs of their program, including equipment needs.

- Tribal leaders requested an update on funding such as food outlays and status of returned funds at the December consultation meeting.

VIII. Integration of Local and Indigenous Food Systems, Including Support for Tribal Producers

FDPIR 638 Self Determination Demonstration Project:

- USDA provided an update on the 638-demonstration project. Currently, 15 Tribes are participating in the demonstration project (16 total historically; one exited). All 15 Tribes were offered and accepted a two-year extension through September 30, 2028.
- Tribal leaders asked about expanding the demonstration to include new Tribes. USDA noted funding constraint limiting the ability to offer a new round of contracts to interested Tribes. To date, FNA has received \$3 million each federal fiscal year to support demonstration activities. Current funding goes towards maintaining existing contracts, as previously supported by Tribal leadership.
- USDA also shared the annual report to Congress will include the following feedback received from participating Tribes:
 - The demonstration project enhances access to traditional/culturally relevant foods resulting in greater participant satisfaction & community pride.
 - It provides economic growth for tribal producers, including meat processing and local fisheries.
 - It strengthens procurement and administrative capacity including contracting, supplier management, and food safety compliance.

IX. Technology Systems, Reporting Requirements, and Operational Efficiencies

USDA DoD Fresh

- Tribal leaders shared recent USDA DoD Fresh vendor changes have led to quality & availability problems, specifically in the Midwest region.
- USDA acknowledged the concerns regarding certain produce vendors servicing the Midwest region. Representatives from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) of the Department of War (DOW), who manage vendor contracts for the USDA DoD Fresh Program shared that corrective action plans have been issued in response to performance issues identified through program feedback, including a formal corrective action letter. DLA has increased engagements and oversight with the vendor, Loffredo, supporting upper Michigan and Wisconsin, which had led to implementation of improvements, including establishing a

dedicated quality-assurance team and reorganizing internal operations to assign personnel specifically to the FDPIR service area. Bi-weekly calls with the vendor also occur to monitor progress and ensure consistent product quality, in coordination with the customer support. A produce quality assessment is also scheduled for Loffredo's Iowa location from 4 -7 August.

X. Restructuring Changes that may Impact FDPIR Delivery

Reorganization to FNA Hubs:

- USDA provided an overview of the USDA FNA reorganization which is under full implementation and has entered its opening stages as of June 1, 2026, including identification of hub locations and staff union negotiations.
- Tribal leaders recommended that USDA consider a pause of one year for the reorganization in FDPIR to allow sufficient time for meaningful dialogue and to observe how other portions of the FNA and USDA reorganization unfold over time.
- Tribal leadership expressed concerns about the impact on food programs for tribal communities and asked for a pause, noting a lack of meaningful consultation.
- USDA expressed that the reorganization is ongoing. Effective June 1, the agency was renamed Food and Nutrition Administration. The agency is moving from seven regional offices to five hubs with program staff co-located to broaden coverage hours and capacity. The reorganization is being implemented as a phased transition. Throughout this entire transition, FNA is committed to ensuring there are no disruptions in service or integrity across any of the 16 nutrition assistance programs.
- USDA's intent is to preserve relationships with tribes with no disruption of services.
- Tribes requested an update on the reorganization at the next consultation, December 2026. Tribal leaders also indicated the need for additional Tribal Consultation specifically on the reorganization (including but not limited to FDPIR) with impacts across the full suite of FNA programs and services. Tribes suggested strongly that USDA failed to conduct meaningful consultation on the reorganization.
- Tribal leaders also asked about Congressional authorization for the reorganization, citing Public Law 119-37 Section 716 as further justification for the need for meaningful consultation.
- USDA encouraged Tribal Leaders to provide feedback via email at SM.FN.AdministratorMailbox@usda.gov where tribal input and comments will be considered.
- USDA confirmed and reiterated its commitment to consultation, FDPIR and the tribes it serves, committing to ensuring that the issues, concerns, and points that have been raised will be elevated.

XI. Veterans' Disability Payment Exclusion

- Tribal leaders requested that FNA consider excluding Veteran pension and Veteran disability payments from FDPIR income determinations.
- After the consultation, on August 12, 2026, FNA communicated with Tribal leaders and NAFDPIR Board members its decision to maintain current policy and continue counting Veteran disability and pension payments as income for FDPIR. The decision keeps income standards consistent with SNAP and reflects longstanding policy.
- Recent 2024 rule changes for FDPIR increased shelter/utility deductions to help households, including Veteran households, meet eligibility requirements.

XII. Closing Remarks and Prayer**XIII. Follow Up Items**

1. **Formal Documentation of Delivery Issues:** FDPIR programs to promptly report missed deliveries and quality issues via the system of record, WBSCM, in addition to contacting Regional Office about time-sensitive issues. USDA contracting staff to continue to use these reports to hold vendors accountable and issue corrective actions. USDA to follow up on previous requests for Tribal warehouse visits, including virtual engagements.
2. **Food Package Items:** USDA to continue working with the Food Package Review Work Group members on alternatives to canned tuna and walleye. USDA to review Tribal recommendations on alternate food sourcing and provide update at December consultation.
3. **Periodic Funding and Administrative Cost Updates** USDA to provide updates on funding levels, food costs, and administrative expenditures at the December 2026 consultation.
4. **Equipment and Infrastructure Requests:** FDPIR programs to submit requests for equipment and infrastructure needs through FNA Regional Offices; USDA to provide support through FNA Regional Office staff.
5. **Consultation on Reorganization Impacts:** Tribal leaders, through the Tribal Leaders Consultation Work Group, will provide a follow-up letter to reiterate their request for Tribal consultation covering the USDA reorganization.
 - FNA received a follow-up letter from Tribal leadership on July 28, 2026, outlining several action items, including a request for Tribal consultation on the USDA reorganization. FNA will provide a formal response within 30 days of receipt of the letter.