

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Welcome to today's conference call. At this time all lines are on listen-only for today's conference. During the question-and-answer portion of our call you will be prompted to press "*1" on your touchtone phone. Please be sure to record your name when prompted so that I may introduce you to ask your question. Our conference is being recorded today. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. I will now turn the conference over to our host, Mr. Tim O'Connor. Sir, you may proceed.

Thank you. And welcome and thank you all for joining us for today's consultation session on the study that we're planning to do, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. My name is Tim O'Connor. I'm the Associate Administrator for Special Nutrition Programs here at the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations is one of the programs that I'm in charge of administering. And I'm going to be your consulting official today.

I'd like to welcome tribal leaders and members to today's important consultation session. I'd like to say, on behalf of the administration, we take consultation very seriously. Last month, on December 2nd, 2011, the President hosted the White House Tribal Nations Conference with tribal leaders and representatives from multiple agencies. That was the third conference hosted by the President to continue to build upon our commitment to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship in Indian Country. The President's commitment is one that is shared by myself and all of the staff here at Food and Nutrition Service.

I am here today to consult with you openly and to listen to your comments so that I, as the associate administrator for special nutrition programs, can make any necessary improvements. Many of you joining us today are very familiar with the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, known as FDPIR. FDPIR provides nutritious USDA foods to low income households living on Indian reservations and to low income American Indian households living in approved service areas near reservations or in Oklahoma.

Currently, FDPIR provides monthly food assistance and nutrition education to approximately 276 tribes through 100 Indian tribal organizations and five state agencies. Over the years program participants have seen positive changes to the food package in FDPIR. Households can select from over 70 products including meat, poultry, beans, eggs, nuts, canned fruits and vegetables, pastas, cereals, rice, milk, and cheese. FNS has also made a concentrated effort to offer a variety of fresh produce items. Through strong partnerships and collaboration, FDPIR has become integral to the nutrition safety net ensuring that approximately 78,000 individuals living on or near Indian reservations have access each month to nutritious USDA foods and nutrition education.

The purpose of today's consultation meeting is to introduce a national study of FDPIR and consult with you tribal leaders and other regarding this study and how it will be

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

conducted. This will be a very important study to all of us. The last time a national FDPIR study was conducted was in 1990. Since then, significant changes have occurred in FDPIR including changes to eligibility rules, foods offered, and food delivery options. This study will help us understand on a national basis who is being served by FDPIR and how we can help make the program more effective.

For many of you joining us today, this may be the first opportunity to learn about the study. I want to ensure we've provided enough information for us to engage in constructive dialogue. In order for us to have that dialogue I've asked the research team involved in this study to join me today. So joining me to support our discussion are Nancy Pindus from the Urban Institute, Carol Hafford from NORC at the University of Chicago, and Walter Hillabrant from Support Services International. I'd like to welcome them to our session and thank them in advance for their presentation. I'd also like to welcome some of my food distribution team here at FNS. These are the folks that work on FDPIR, Laura Castro and Dana Rasmussen. All of us together recovered various aspects of this study and its objectives.

As I mentioned, I'd like today's session to be an open dialogue. I want to hear from you, and your thoughts and comments about this study so that I can ensure the study is conducted properly and meet our objectives. We are in the design stage for this study and want to be sure that your ideas and concerns shape it. Today's consultation session, which is available as a web meeting as well as a conference call, is a format we're still learning from. This format will not be the only format for consultation sessions but one of many types which may include in-person. We're looking for a variety of ways to provide an open dialogue.

Before we get started, I'm going to turn it over to our moderator for today's session, Barbara Lopez, to talk about the logistics for the meeting. She'll discuss today's agenda, how to access meeting materials, how to ask a question or make a comment over the phone, as well as how to submit a written comment. I would like to mention that today's session and all your comments will be part of the official consultation record. I'll also ask Barbara to lead participant introductions for tribal leaders and/or their designees and join us in introductions. I look forward to hearing from you and learning who is joining us today. Barbara.

Thank you so much, Tim. And welcome everyone to today's consultation session. I just want to spend just a couple of minutes to go over some logistics for today's meeting and ensure that everyone joining us has today's materials so we can have a constructive dialogue. Some of you may be joining us on the web meeting; if you are, then you'll be able to see all the different slides that we have provided on your computer. You can also access today's handouts from the web meeting.

If you look over on the top right hand corner of your computer screen you're going to see a little icon with three little pieces of paper, that little icon is handout icon, you'll be able to download three documents that we've provided for today's session. Those three

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

documents include today's agenda which covers the different aspects of today's study, as well as who will be presenting. We also have included today's presentation materials, so today's PowerPoint is also available as a handout for your reference for today's session as well as for future reference. And we also provided a subscription of the project of the study for your reference as well.

Some of you may be joining us just on the conference call portion of today's meeting. If so, we want to make sure that you, too, have all the handouts available so you can follow along. So please let us know if you do have those materials in front of you. If you do not, you can let us know during introductions, and we'll make sure to send those materials to you.

Just to let everyone know, we do have a public website for our tribal efforts; that website is WWW.FNS.USDA.GOV/FNS/TRIBAL. It's a really good website to have. We post all different resources on this website including our consultation schedule, we post all our handouts, our materials, you're also able to register for our sessions there, and we try to keep it as up to date as possible so you can have the latest information by going to this website.

I also want to quickly cover how to ask a question or make a comment to engage in dialogue for today's session. You have two options, one, if you are logged on to the webinar and you'd like to submit a written question, you may do so, there's a little "Q&A" menu item in the upper top left-hand side of your computer, that's question & answers, and if you click on that little "Q&A" you will be able to submit a written question to us. And we receive all the written questions over here and we'll be able to answer and definitely catalogue all your questions here. You can also ask a question or make a comment from the phone by pressing "*1" on your phone, that will allow you to connect with the operator who will connect your line directly with us.

We'd like to now go ahead and start participant introductions if you're joining us. Please press "*1" on your phones and you'll be able to participate in introductions. The operator will assist us and you will be able to record your name and your tribe. And just as a reminder, this session will be part of the official consultation record, so we really would like to know if you're joining us today for that consultation record. Today's session will be recorded and transcribed and be included as well. And, operator, please, if we can get your assistance.

Attendees:

Claudeen Tallwood, Food Distribution Program Manager, Navajo Nation.

Judy Fisch, Director of the Sherwood Valley Food Program, Sherwood Valley Rancheria, Northern California,.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Beatrice Tashquinth, manager of the Family Assistance Division which includes the food distribution program, Tohono O'odham Nation.

Kim Watson, Food Distribution Program, Cherokee Indian Nation, Cherokee, North Carolina.

Desiree Simeon, Registered Dietician, Anchorage, Alaska with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Susan Linton, Food Distribution Program Director, Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association.

Shauna, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians

Charles "Red" Gates, Program Director and designee for Tribal Chairman, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota/South Dakota.

Kris Schwiderson, Program Director, Bay Mills Indian Community

Angela Smartt, Food Distribution Director, Burns Paiute Tribe

Roxanna Newsom, Program Manager for the Food Distribution Program for Chickasaw Nation and President of NAFDPIR

Janelle Gimlin, Program Chief State, Nevada Food Distribution Program.

Tracy Potts, Commodities Coordinator, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Food Distribution Program in Mayetta, Kansas

Don Miller, Food Distribution Director, United Nation of Wisconsin

Tod Robertson, Program Director, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and Vice President of NAFDPIR

Gregory Nothstine, Food Distribution Program Manager, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Anchorage, Alaska. I also serve on the NAFDPIR board.

Dorothy Palmer, Program Manager, Colville Tribe in Washington State

Sam Spang, Program Tribe, Sac and Fox Nation Food Distribution Program

Howard Hooke, Manager, San Carlos Apache Tribe.

Lily, otherwise known as (INAUDIBLE), from Anchorage, Alaska.

Michael Pierre, FDPIR Director, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Montana

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Tony Nertoli, Food Distribution Program's Tribe, Sioux Tribe Food Distribution Center

Thank you so much. Thanks, everyone, for joining us for introductions. I'll now hand it back to Mr. Tim O'Connor.

Thanks, Barbara. And thank you all for joining us today. It's great to hear from folks that I've had the privilege to work with over the last year or so and get to know some more of you. So let's go ahead and get started with the agenda today. And I'm going to turn this over to Laura Castro and Dana Rasmussen.

Okay. And for those of you following along with the slides, we are on slide seven at this point. And I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you as well to the consultation call today. I am the Director of the Food Distribution Division at USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. And I'm very pleased that we are beginning this study and are beginning the first of several consultations we will have as this study progresses.

As you hear more about the study today, please keep in mind that we are doing this research to get information that all of us need to make FDPIR work now and in the future. Making decisions about what foods to offer, what eligibility criteria is appropriate, and how much funding is needed to support the program depend on having information about the needs of our FDPIR participants. We have such study data on participants in many of our larger programs. Having a nationally-representative FDPIR study will help ensure that FDPIR gets the resources that it needs. We cannot make this study work alone. Your help and input is truly key to this study's success. That is why we are on the call today. This is the second of two consultation calls being held this month in reference to the study. And we will inform and engage you throughout the course of our study.

As part of this process we're planning to hold future consultation sessions with those FDPIR tribes that are ultimately selected to be in the study sample. And throughout the study we will need participating FDPIR tribes' input. After these consultation calls we will post materials and updates on our website and provide a link to those materials to interested parties, including the FDPIR program community and the National Association of FDPIR. In addition, if you'd rather not ask a question or provide comments on today's call, or if you have any comments or input after the call ends, we have a dedicated email address that you can use to provide comments, and that email address is TRIBALAFFAIRS@FNS.USDA.GOV.

Up next, I would like to introduce Dana Rasmussen who is chief of the policy branch in Food Distribution Division. He will talk about the purpose of the study and the benefits of the study for both the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and our tribes. Thank you, again, and welcome to this important consultation call.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Thanks, Laura. And we're on slide eight for those of you referencing from your office. Welcome, everyone, to this consultation call today. Tim mentioned the last national study of FDPIR was completed over two decades ago, back in 1990. That's quite a long time and a great deal has changed with the program since then.

With regard to this new FDPIR study, first and foremost, we want to obtain an updated description for participants and programs. To do this, the Department of Agriculture, along with the Urban Institute and its partners at SSI and NORC, will work to describe changes in the program and statistics since 1990. This includes changes to delivery options, foods offered, nutrition education, eligibility rules, and demographics.

Now to give you an idea of the scope of this FDPIR national study, we want to, first and foremost, obtain an updated demographic profile of households and individuals that currently participate in FDPIR, including their participation in other assistance programs. For example, we don't know the number of seniors participating in the program right now nationally in relation to other age groups. You may know this locally, but we need this information from a national standpoint to help make better decisions about the foods we offer, our eligibility requirements, and, in general, how we can make the program better fit the needs of this age group and others that are participating in the program.

We also want to assess FDPIR's contribution to participant's food supply. We know that FDPIR contributes greatly to each participant's monthly food supply, but we want to measure it. In addition, we want to quantify the extent to which FDPIR participants switch between FDPIR and SNAP. This would include determining the main reasons for the movement between the two programs.

Importantly, we want to explore the reasons why fewer individuals are participating in FDPIR. Now, we hear anecdotally that the level of average monthly participation has been on the decline based on a comparative value of SNAP benefits to FDPIR, but we've seen that over the long-term FDPIR participation has been changed nationally. We want to quantify that and figure out all the potential reasons for that change.

Now we also want to obtain descriptive information on key aspects of FDPIR operations. In particular, we want to know what the change in the last 20 or so years. Again, we know some things anecdotally through our conversations with program managers and staff, but actual data is very beneficial to us in determining program needs. Furthermore, we want to figure out the resources devoted to nutrition education and the format of the information provided directly to FDPIR participants; in other words, what works best within available funding.

Some other items that we want to explore, we want to identify the factors that affect program managers' decisions on which FDPIR foods are offered and ordered from FNS; for example, participant appeal, variety, shelf life, nutritional content, and perhaps some combination thereof. We want to learn more about the approaches used to distribute

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

food packages to participants and why they're selected. For example, we know the grocery store concept has become more widely used in recent years, and the quantitative data would be very useful to us in showing the advantages of that concept. Of course, we know that some of the answers – we know some of these answers anecdotally. But to really measure what works we need data across programs.

Finally, we want to figure out the level of participant satisfaction with FDPIR, and that would be both administrative practices and the food package. This is going to let us know if we need to make changes that would possibly impact participants. And as you can see, we have a wide range of topics that we want to cover here, but ultimately the goal is to give us the information we need to make this program better. We've invested a great deal of funding in this study separate from FDPIR program resources, with the idea that this research will provide the latest information to help make informal – excuse me, formal decisions about the program, in turn helping to make it better for participants and program operators.

Now as Laura mentioned, and given the wide range of topics that we want to learn more about, this study isn't going to work without your help. We know the general scope of the study, but you may have suggestions for topics or issues that you want us to study. These calls represent an opportunity for you to do that, provide input, let us know if there's specific issues that you think would be a good idea to address within the scope of this study. As we move to slide nine, "Study Benefits," I've already touched on this briefly, we want to obtain current information to help us make decisions about how to better administer this program. In particular, we want to identify the needs of participants and we want to figure out ways to make the program more beneficial to participants. We may obtain information that could not only help us make the program better for program participants but Indian tribal organizations and states that administer FDPIR as well.

And we want to get information representative of all FDPIR, IPOs and state agencies, which we can then share with program communities. We not only want to conduct the study with your input, but we also want to share what we find from this study with you. We view this as a study that will not only benefit USDA but all FDPIR programs. Now, for example, we work with an FDPIR food package review workgroup, and that consists mainly of program directors, nutrition professionals that are selected by the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations.

If we learn from the study that participants aren't satisfied with some aspect of the food package we can then work with the workgroup to change that. In addition, if the study reveals that we should change something in our program regulations or policy to help the program run more smoothly or in some way benefits participants, we'd have the supporting data necessary to do that. We can then work with the program community to see what works and what doesn't.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

So I'd like to say thanks, again, for being here with us today on this consultation call. We know that this is a great deal of information to absorb in a relatively short period of time. We will be opening it up soon for consultation after this section. But, first, what I would like to do is introduce Nancy Pindus from the Urban Institute who's going to speak for a few minutes and provide an overview of the study.

Thank you, Dana. Welcome and hello. This is Nancy Pindus, the director of the study at the Urban Institute. I want to start by saying how pleased we are to be working on this study. The Urban Institute, with Support Services International, or SSI, conducted a much smaller study of the FDPIR program in 2008 and 2009. I do recognize some of the names on the call from that study. We had wonderful cooperation from a very dedicated group of FDPIR directors and staff. So we look forward to working with you again and providing information that will improve the program for ITOs and participants.

Just a little background about the study, the study is administered by the Office of Research and Analysis at FNS, and they're working in close collaboration with the Food Distribution Division at FNS.

Moving on to slide 11, I just want to mention our project team. The Food and Nutrition Service selected the Urban Institution, a non-profit policy research organization, in Washington DC, to conduct this study along with NORC at the University of Chicago, and SSI. Other names that you will be hearing at the Urban Institute are Diane Levy, the project manager, and Chris Narducci, a research associate at the Urban Institute. NORC is a nationally known survey research firm. Carol Hafford, who you'll hear from in a few minutes, and Suzanne Bard will be responsible for the case record review and participants' surveys. Walter Hillabrant, President of SSI, is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Tribe and worked with us on the earlier FDPIR study. And Carolyn Walter will be speaking in a few minutes. With respect to oversight of the project, the Federal Office of Management and Budget, or OMB, and USDA will be reviewing everything that we've proposed to do, and they do take that responsibility very seriously.

Moving on to slide 12, just to give you a sense of the timeline here, this slide shows the key dates and intent to schedule for the study. After the consultation today and the one that we had last week, there will be follow-up consultations for the tribes that are selected for the study sample. The format and timing of those isn't confirmed yet, but these two January calls and the future consultations are very, very important. We need your input to make this study a success. And so particularly those involved in the sample will be hearing a lot more from us, and everyone is welcome, all of the tribes, to provide suggestions as we're working on the study design and the instrument development.

Moving on to the next slide, slide 13. At the end of the study, which will be in late 2014, we will be comparing the final report, and there will be a number of opportunities for sharing that information and disseminating that information. The report will combine findings across tribes, showing a national picture of participants. And there will be

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

opportunities where FNS will get the report information out and where we will be sharing the findings of the report and where tribes will be able to share it amongst themselves any best practices and other ideas that they may think of based on the results for suggestions for the program.

And the next slide -- I think at this point we're going to take a little break here. And if you have any questions, because this covers a lot, and so I'm going to turn it back to Barbara Lopez and she will give you an opportunity to bring up questions or comments.

Great. Thank you so much, Nancy. This is a reminder to press "*1" on your phone. We're going to now stop and open up for consultation and open dialogue. If you'd like to ask a question or make a comment, you can press "*1" on your phone and the operator will connect your line with us.

Please be sure to record your name as well.

And, operator, do we have anyone?

We have a question from Judy Fisch. Your line is open.

Hi. I just have a comment to make about the demographic information gathering. I think is essential, not only on the national level but also locally. And I would just like to let you know that the instrument that we have for gathering our client data, it's a very involved and complex program. It works great for the actual program delivery side, but for gathering demographic data it is very lacking. The reason I'm aware of this is because my particular program, we have a lot of small tribes in Northwestern California, and I work with a total of about 23 tribal groups, give or take. They come and go here and there a little bit.

But I was asked, for example, from one community, who was putting in for a grant, to give them some information on how many people in their valley were receiving food commodities so that they would have some good data. And the problem is we can't disaggregate that, or we can't sort by -- we can't, you know, do, like, if you had a fancy database, we can't generate reports like that. We can generate reports specific to our inventory and our numbers of people served. But if you want to get the information that you were talking about, there's going to have to be some adjustment in the AIS system.

The only way that I could tell this particular community how many people who live in that valley who receive food was to actually print out a list and count because we have tribal members living in different communities, we have people from different tribes living in that valley, there's no way that you can sort that data. You could probably do it by date of birth to get the elder figures, but it's very not suited for the task that needs to be done with gathering food information about demographics. That's my comment.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Thank you very much. That's really helpful. That's the kind of background we're going to be wanting before we get started and go too far. So that's really helpful.

Okay. And I'm going to excuse myself because it's lunchtime, but I'll be back.

Thank you again.

Our next comment is from Gregory. Your line is open.

Oh, you mentioned that this is being recorded for the record. And I was just curious, you know, for those who don't want to ask or make comment on today's call, but who may wish to ask their question using email that's provided, I was just curious if those questions or comments that might be received in that fashion would be shared with the rest of the ITOs or in your minutes or on the website? That's the only inquiry I had.

Greg, this is Dana Rasmussen. I guess it would depend on the question. If it's specific to your Indian tribal organization we could respond individually. But if it's something that you believe needs to be addressed on a national basis, we can consider a way to convey that information to the folks on the call.

I wasn't sure if it was frequently – it would be frequently asked questions that may –

Right.

That every tribe may not want to ask at this particular time, but that may come up. I wasn't sure if that was going to be collected and shared with everybody else.

Sure. If you have a question after the session, let us know. And if it's something that might apply to everybody, you know, that's on the call today, we can be sure to share that information.

Thank, Gregory, for your comment and questions.

Our next comment is from Claudeen Tallwood. Your line is open.

Hi. This is Claudeen from Navajo Nation. Just a comment and what we're doing here on Navajo Food Distribution Program. I have seven warehouses on our Navajo Nation here. What we are incorporating into our eligibility is that we are allowing our warehouses to start gathering information on how many veterans we're serving, how many elderly we're serving, how many youth are we serving, only because our program, we're under Division of Health, we need to start collaborating with our aging program, special diabetes program, our youth program. So we're kind of trying to collaborate and get all this information, and that's at the tribal level, and maybe that might be helpful information coming from Navajo.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

That sounds terrific. That could be very helpful. So we will certainly be following up on that. Thank you.

You're welcome.

Thanks so much, Claudeen.

Our last comment at this time comes from Desiree Simeon. Your line is open.

Hi. I know part of the answer to this question is working with us, but my question is how will you ensure that the information gathered is gathered in a culturally-sensitive manner, and will the study be approved by tribal IRBs?

Well the short answer – thank you very much for your question. The short answer is yes, and you'll hear a little bit more about this in the rest of this presentation. We will be working individually with each of the tribes that are selected for this study to find out about their procedures, which includes both any formal research review and approval procedures, as well as any cultural concerns, issues, schedules, community events that we have to work around, anything like that. So that will be done on a case by case basis with each of the tribes in the sample.

Thanks, Desiree, for your question. And, again, we're going to be covering it in the next section as well.

We have no further questions at this time.

Thank you so much. We'll go ahead now and move on to the next section which is part two on how the study will be conducted, and I'll hand it over back to Ms. Nancy Pindus to cover this section.

Thank you. I'm just going to go to introductions again and hand this part off to Walter Hillabrant who's going to talk about the next three slides, which will highlight the key topics that we want to learn about. So, Walter.

Thank you, Nancy. And as Nancy has indicated, I'll be doing slides 16, 17, and 18. I want to start off and say, "bozho," hello to everyone. I'm looking forward to working on this study and finding ways to strengthen this important program. One of the key project goals has been mentioned earlier as to provide an updated national profile of FDPIR participants. This profile can be compared to prior times to determine the nature of change, if any, in participants over time.

The profile includes demographic information such as, as just discussed moments ago, participant age and gender, household composition; that is, who lives in the household with the participant, employment status, indicators of economic hardship, and FDPIR

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

eligibility factors such as length of certification period and changes in circumstances that affect eligibility.

Turning to slide 17, still talking about key design topics, other participant information collected will help show how the program affects FDPIR participants. We're going to seek information from participants about how they store and prepare foods, how they pick up and acquire food, as well as barriers to accessing program benefits like distance to FDPIR distribution sites, participants' transportation options. We want to find out the sources of food for participants and the role played by FDPIR. We want to find out the satisfaction with the program and suggestions for program improvement. And we want to find out what factors influence participation in FDPIR and other related programs.

Turning to slide 18, I want to say that the study seeks to complement the profile of FDPIR participants with a profile of program services and activities across sites. To do that we will collect information about the FDPIR program operations; specifically, for example, we want to describe the nature of nutrition education activities and the factors influencing these activities. including nutrition education grants. We will also collect information about activities coordinated with other programs such as WIC and SNAP.

FDPIR grantees distribute in a variety of ways. We will identify these food distribution methods and their relative advantages and disadvantages. We will identify factors, program effective participation, and the program in general, as well as reasons for decreases and increases in participation at different sites. Administrators and selected site staff perceptions about the factors influencing program participation will complement the reports that we get from participants. So with that now, I want to pass this on to Carol Hafford who will talk about NORCs work.

Thank you, Walter. Hello, this is Carol Hafford from NORC at the University of Chicago. I'd like to begin by saying that we at NORC are looking forward to working with the tribes in collecting information that will be helpful to the FDPIR participants, the programs, and FNS. I'll start my review of these next three slides by saying a bit about sampling in general before moving on to data collection.

First, we recognize that each tribe and its program is unique, yet sampling is a way of obtaining representative data from a limited number of programs which represent a larger group, in this case, all FDPIR programs. As the goal of this study is to describe the FDPIR participants and programs, a nationally representative sample of programs will be drawn. They will be sampling 26 Indian tribal organizations and state organizations with a probability proportionate to the number of current participants in the program.

What this means is that of the 26 programs, we expect that the largest seven programs will be selected in the sample with certainty. This allows for most large, some medium, and a few smalls food distribution programs to be included in the sample across Indian Country and across the FNS region. The sample selection will be stratified by FNS

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

region, but will also reflect growth in tribal participation over the last decade so that, to the extent possible, the sample participants are correctly distributed across regions and reflect the distribution of growth trends. This is a fair way to ensure that all participants within the ITOs have an equal chance to be selected for participation in the study. When we analyze the data from the study we'll be able to paint a picture that describes common characteristics and variations across ITOs and state organizations.

Going to turn now to slide 20 and talk a bit about the data collection components. This is a new data collection, and it will involve three major components, and I will say a bit about each one. There's the case record review, the participant surveys, and the site visits. First, the purpose of the case record review is to obtain information that will describe current program characteristics. This includes household composition, the presence of elders and children, sources in fluctuations in income, other resources or benefits that are available.

The case record review will occur with the 26 sampled ITOs, and about 32 records will be reviewed at each of the sites with a little more at the larger sites. NORC staff will work with each ITO to conduct the case review, making sure to respect travel research protocol. And since many of the programs use paper records, the case review will usually involve a visit to the FDPIR office by researchers to extract participant information from the records. All information drawn from the case records will be carefully protected and will maintain participant's privacy.

Second, moving on to the program participants, this will involve a telephone or in-person survey, and it provides a way for participants to share their thoughts and suggestions about the FDPIR program in their community. It should take about 30 minutes and will be conducted by NORC-trained field interviewers that have experience conducting surveys in Indian Country. This survey will be conducted with the same households that were sampled for the case record review. And this will also allow for us to obtain additional information such as travel affiliation across the ITOs.

So to hearken back to the comment that we made earlier about the difficulty of capturing that, the survey would be able to obtain that information. One of the reasons to align the case record and this survey is so that we reduce the burden on the respondents. An incentive will also be provided that we will discuss with each ITO as to the best means for doing that.

The third part of the data collection involves site visits to a number of ITOs to learn more about FDPIR program participants. And during the visits the Urban Institute and SSI will conduct staff interviews, hold discussion groups with FDPIR participants and non-participants, and tour the FDPIR program facilities. All components of the data collection will be reviewed by federally approved institutional review boards at the Urban Institute and at NORC and by any tribal IRBs. We will ensure that the participants provide informed consent and that their confidentiality is protected, and any personal identifiers will be removed from all data collected and data will be secured securely.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Moving on now to slide 21; our goal is to work collaboratively with the tribes in conducting the various components of the data collection, and tribal involvement is very important to us in this study. Once the sample of FDPIR programs is selected we'll be reaching out to the selected ITOs individually and respectfully ask that you work with us in a number of ways to conduct this study using methods that pose the least burden and the most benefit to the tribes. So this will involve working with our outreach staff to tailor informational materials, procedures, and schedules for your tribe, advising us about tribal protocols, conducting research in your communities such as obtaining tribal resolutions and any logistical planning for the data collection, and encouraging participating in the survey and in the site visits.

We also welcome input from all ITOs on data collection topics, and we'll be asking for volunteers from a small number of ITOs to help in pretesting the survey questionnaire and the site visit question guides. And it's important to note that participation in this study may offer opportunities to build tribal capacity to conduct similar studies. Some examples are learning how to sample and pull the case records for extracting data from case records, or helping with logistical considerations for conducting focus groups.

So in conclusion, and before I turn this back over to Nancy Pindus, I'd like to say that NORC looks forward to your insights and working with all of you. Thank you for listening.

Thank you, Carol. I just wanted to let you know what's coming up next. The upcoming tasks for this study, the next task that we'll be working on are the data collection instruments, and that includes the participant survey, forms for getting the case record data, and discussion guides for the site visits. And these are reviewed carefully by the project team and by FNS.

A variety of information must be submitted by FNS to the Office of Management and Budget for review and clearance. And we can't begin data collection until we have received approval from OMB. So in the next month we'll be selecting the sample tribes for the study, and when that is approved by FNS we'll begin outreach to the tribes to learn about their procedures and systems and facilitate their participation in the study.

So since we are moving on to -- wanting to get some of your inputs, since we are at that stage of developing instruments, this is a time where we really want to be getting your input. Some of the things that we really want to hear about from you are any strategies would encourage participation by FDPIR staff and program participants in the tribe center in the sample. We really need your assistance to make the study a success and to help us understand and respect tribal customs, procedures, and calendars when it comes to conducting the study on respective reservations.

We also want to hear about any areas of potential concern you might have about the study, and any topics or questions that we should be including in these data collection

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

instruments that might help all of us better understand why participation is declining or what things can be changed and approved about the program. So we're currently completing our study plan and we'll be designing the instruments. So we really will do our best to incorporate your input and address any concerns at this stage of the process.

So now I'm going to turn it back to Barbara Lopez to give you a chance to provide any comments, questions, other things you think we need to know before we close out today.

Thank you, Nancy. We're going to go ahead and stop there and open the session for consultation. So once again, that will be "*1" on your phones. You'll be able to record your name and connect with the operator who can connect your line with us. So that's "*1" on your phone. And, operator, please.

We have a question from Cecilia Gonzales-Lyons. Your line is open.

Hi. One of the biggest concerns that we have, and I hear this all the time, and we even talk about it when we're at the Western Region Conference, is that the diet – or some of the food isn't geared towards people with diabetes, and it's a concern with a lot of Native Americans that some of the food isn't geared towards that. And a lot of them find it necessary to have to go to food stamps in order to get that type of food that they need. And diabetes is an epidemic disease that's happening in our nation.

Thank you, Cecilia, for your thoughtful comment.

Our next comment is from Tony Nertoli. Your line is open.

Good afternoon. I've got a couple comments. Starting off on the review on this, are we going to be able to, as you development your instruments to do the program, are we going to be able to review what you are proposing to the various tribes such as this through consultation, is one question. And then once the instruments or the review instrument is done, are we going to be able to review it and make comments before you go up to the tribes on this?

And then one of the suggestions that I would make, I haven't heard yet, is that many of the tribes are all set up, you have the tribal stores, tribal warehouses, and then within that the distribution; I would hope that you would look at your tribes that do various tailgates, some just a short distance, some a long distance, some that do multiple distributions. And then for OMB and the rest of that, are we going to be required to get a privacy release from our participants, because I know our program, we don't even get out to some of our tribal officials unless it can be a collateral contact. I don't know if this falls in that or if you're going to issue a notice to the tribes so that they can deal with that.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

And then the other thing I want you to – one of the other questions that you've got to ask is the effect of best to use data on our food program and how that affects people or how they feel about it because I don't wish to create controversy, but sometimes when you use the "Best to use" dates and the availability of all the food that isn't there creates an idea that we are a second-class programs. With that, thank you.

Who wants to take some of that first?

Tony, this is Dana. I guess to address one at a time, when it comes to privacy, Nancy, did you want to cover that?

Again, there are a couple of levels of this. We have institutional review boards at our organizations, which, they exist because of federal regulations or doing research. So we have to show our institutional review boards that we are protecting the privacy and giving informed consent to all participants in all of our studies. So it would have to go through that review first because we couldn't proceed unless that happened, and then when we go and do outreach with each of the tribes they may have their own procedures, which are a little different or in addition to what we had to show for our own institutional IRBs, and we would proceed to do what needs to be done with that.

Even on the smaller study we did, we had some additional consent forms and all that were used because some of the tribal IRBs required that. So, you know, it would depend on what the tribe requires, but we would certainly be going through those stages. And we have a fairly long period devoted to outreach because we know that for some tribes that might take a while to get through their channels and approvals. So that's the privacy.

Now, Tony, did that answer your question on that front?

On that, yes. Thank you, Dana.

Sure. On use-by dates, we can look into that as far as when it comes to participants' satisfaction and what have you, and I think that's something to consider when it comes to the study.

It's important. Something we hear. Directing the program and issuing the stuff, it's very much a concern to us and to how people perceive the program.

Of course. Thank you, Tony.

You're welcome.

So your other question was about whether you'd be able to review instruments?

Correct.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Now some of this is up to FNS, but there's one step that's for sure that everyone will be involved in, which is when we have to submit – when FNS submits anything to the Office of Management and Budget for review, first there will be a Federal Register notice of this study that the study is coming out and there's a proposed date of collection, and at that point people can write in and email any questions they have about the whole concept of doing the study. And then when the actual instrument and draft package are submitted, those are posted, and any member of the public has the right to review them and comment on them. And there will also be a website that FNS has, the tribal website that will have this information on it. Did I miss anything, Dana?

Perfect. Thank you, Nancy.

Thank you, Tony. And, operator, we'll check with you.

The next one is from Roxanna. Your line is open.

Hi. I am just wondering if we could suggest to the Food Package Review Workgroup and also probably to the warehouse that are conducting calls and working on issues if they would be willing to have someone from this study group participate in the calls and face to face as an observer just to be able to glean more information as to perhaps some of the challenges that we're facing?

That makes sense, Roxanna. We can do that.

That's a great suggestion, because I'm sure we'll learn a lot.

Thank you again. And, operator, please.

The next one is from Lily from Anchorage. Your line is open.

Yeah, thank you. This is Lily. I just wanted to say that when I was younger I used to be on food stamps, and then in the early '90s I started working for the food stamp office. And from those two personal experiences I learned a lot. And now I'm the FDPIR certifier up here, and I see a lot of differences between the State of Alaska Food Stamp Program Manual and our own FNS Handbook.

Great.

I see a lot of disparities because the food Alaska State – State of Alaska food stamps manual gives waiver for people who are unemployed for long periods because employment up here is hard to find. And in FDPIR we have to certify people with no dependent children up to two months, in food stamps, certify them for six months. And because of that Paperwork Reduction Act, they don't do the NMRs each month two days, when they used to when I was working up there. And then food stamps have

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

urban one, two, and three income guidelines up here in Alaska because the farther north you go, the higher everything is; the groceries, energy, electricity, utilities. It's much higher up there. And income guideline we go by right now is one income guidelines for the whole State of Alaska. So those are the one side in disparities between SNAP and FDPIR. Thank you.

Thank you, Lily, for your thoughtful comments.

We have one other at this time. It's from Desiree Simeon. Ma'am, your line is reopened.

Hi. I just had more of a comment. And as you build your data collection, I'm hoping that you really touch on things like trust and, you know, perceptions, and especially around the perceived health impact of previous FDPIR foods. I think, you know, trust and those kinds of concepts are something that we need to build on. And so I'm just hoping that we see – I know that's something that's hard to gauge and get the level of, but I think it's a really important concept that we need to grasp within this specific data collection.

Thank you. That's a really good suggestion.

And, operator, please, do we have any more comments.

We have a comment that gave in from Janice. Your line is open.

Hi, this is Janice Jimmy. I'm calling from Mississippi Choctaw. I came on late and missed the introductions earlier, but good afternoon to everyone. I have a couple of questions. I missed the part about the discussion of the IRB, and I'd like to know what is the process or what is the regulatory process that will be used for those tribes that do not have IRBs?

Well, the instruments will be going through IRBs at the research organizations. Both NORC and the Urban Institute have institutional review boards that meet federal regulations to protect privacy and make sure that there is informed consent for participation in studies. So that will happen for all of the tribes. And then in the outreach to individual tribes, sometimes do have formal IRBs, others have consortia that they're involved with, and other tribes may have procedures where, on a case-by-case basis, we submit our research instruments and plan, and they have to bring it before their council and have a tribal resolution to provide – to agree to participate in the study. So whatever the tribe has for their – decides on for their procedures is what we would follow.

Okay. In the sample I saw the part where it said you would be obtaining demographic information, and I missed that, too. What identifying information will be solicited from the sample participants?

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

You want to maybe let Carol will take that one.

Okay. I can turn to the study plan to address that question. But in reviewing the case record files there is demographic information contained there, and particularly regarding the authorized recipients, the household size, the length of certification, and then information on each household member; so that would include the relationship to the head of household, the date of birth, race, ethnicity, gender, and then other items that were on the certification form such as the income sources and amount, whether or not someone is a student in the household and their receipt of educational grants, scholarships, loans, or other types of assistance. So that will help build the profile of participants and their households that we can then use for analysis. And then in developing the survey, what we'll be doing is matching this sample drawn from the case records to – it will be those people that will then participate in the survey and be able to share their thoughts about the FDPIR program and their satisfaction with it.

Okay. One more question. I saw that the purpose of this survey is to improve the FDPIR program in the tribal communities. So the generalization will be across the nation based on the data that you receive?

Yes.

Okay. All right. That's all I have. Thank you.

Thank you, Janice, for joining us again.

Our next comment comes from Sam Spang. Your line is open.

Yes. I understand that USDA/FNS is sponsoring this national study to try to better understand why FDPIR participation has been declining. At the same time, I'm kind of wondering, you know, what SNAP is doing nationwide, you know, is that going up while we're going down or is SNAP going down too, and, you know, I was just kind of wondering if we're going to be looking at both programs with this study, and, you know, going into things like our food packages and how they vary, you know. Because ours compared to theirs, you know, they can pretty much get what they want. You know, with our food package it's kind of a – I mean it's the same thing every month, they kind of have a limited selection. Most of the people I talk to, you know, if they go to SNAP, you know, it's because they have a greater selection of foods to choose from. But I was just kind of wondering, you know, where they stand compared to FDPIR nationwide, if they're going down too with their participation.

Sam, this is Tim O'Connor, I can partly address that. The roles in SNAP are high, and they're at actually historic highs right now in part because of the economy, and I think that's certainly the major driver. In terms of this study and how it fits in with that, we have a lot of information that we get on the participants in the SNAP program, and we get that on a fairly continual basis. So we have sort of up-to-date information partly

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

because we have a quality control system there that's constantly collecting statistically valid information across each state.

We don't have the same kind of data for the FDPIR program. So, you know, while we have it for SNAP, we're trying to sort of fill in the gaps, if you will, for FDPIR. And we've heard for a long time about the differences between FDPIR and SNAP, and, you know, the kinds of things that you just said which is that. You know, that seems to be why people are moving from one program to the other, from FDPIR to SNAP.

What we want to try to do is kind of in a more scientific way, which is the purpose of the study, is to be able to nail down exactly what we do know and what we don't know so that we don't end up just talking about anecdotes. It doesn't mean that we don't believe the anecdotes. But if we need to look at making policy changes, then the folks that are going to be questioning whether or not we can go forward with those need facts, and this study is aimed at giving us the foundation that we need in order to be able to suggest policy changes one way or another in any aspect of the program. So, long answer, but the short piece of it is we have this kind of information on a continual basis for SNAP and we don't for FDPIR, and that's why we want to come out and try to get it at this point. Hopefully that's helpful.

Thanks, Sam, for your question.

Our next response is from Charles Gates. Your line is open.

Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. My nickname is "Red," and that's the name I prefer to be addressed as. But my first question would be in selection of the 26 tribes or programs on what basis are you going to be selecting those 26 tribes, big, small, urban area, rural area, what kind of – or I guess, how are they going to be selected?

Our preliminary approach to doing this is to select them by size and within FNS regions.

By size.

By size and then to stratify by region and growth in tribal participation trends.

Right.

So this represents some of the more analytic work that we have to do to draw the sample, and our statisticians will be doing this.

Okay. So you haven't come up with the criteria by which these 26 programs are going to be selected.

Well it's largely by size of the program with respect to the number of participants.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Okay. So you're going to try and equal it out large, medium, small?

Yes.

Well –

We will have some that are large, we'll have some that are medium, and a few that are small.

The reason I ask this question is because -- and I realize you're not part of the federal government -- sometimes we all get thrown together, and I know the term isn't being used too much, but one size doesn't fit all, you know. Some of them operate much differently than the other, even though they're big programs. But that's why I asked the question.

Yeah, and we certainly appreciate that and know that every tribe is different. The goal is really for the national estimate to be of the characteristics of participants, not the different program features. So that's a little bit of a distinction there.

Okay. Another question, I'm kind of bothered that you're going to be – the study is going to be limited to participants only and to the programs because it's going to be hard. I can tell right now, I know why ours declined. They all went to food stamps because they can buy anything they want. I'd say 90% of our people that have left us, and the other 10% have been – the older ones have passed on, and they're no longer with us. But the younger generation loves that EBT card because they can buy anything they want. And the ones that have stayed with the program are the ones that feel that it's a better program. But the younger generation, they don't want to cook, they want everything quick and easy. So I'm just wondering if the right people are going to be surveyed. Comment and a question, I guess.

Okay. I can address part of that -- and this is Carol Hafford from NORC speaking – is that we will be surveying the current participants within a particular month. But there's also an opportunity to learn about people that are not participating in the program, and that would largely occur through the site visits that the Urban Institute and SSI will be doing because they'll be having focus groups with both participants and former participants or non-participants in the program to really get an understanding of what some of these decisions people are making about whether to participate in SNAP or in FDPIR.

And we will, just as you've said you know, that we will be talking to the programs staff and program managers, what their perceptions are of why people are choosing to participate in SNAP or why they're switching back and forth between the two programs. So we'll be hearing that from all the programs that we visit.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Okay. Yeah, because we here at Standing Rock, we try when someone's leaving the program and it's been a lot, we get the younger families for a month or two and then they want to close into and go to SNAP, and I try to get the staff to ask them why and they'll tell you straight out, "I don't know how to cook," or "I can buy more things with my EBT card, I can buy whatever I want to." So, you know, it made me feel like this study wasn't even needed, but I'm sure there are some things you're going to find out that may help the program.

But I took this to some of our tribal council members -- we have committees -- and I explained it to them, and the first concern they had is is this study going to be a positive study for the program because when they've seen the declining participation we all get a little scared, you know. Is this the end of FDPIR or is the way that's going to make it better?

Hey, Red, this is Tim. How are you?

Just find.

The purpose of the study is not to put the FDPIR program out of business. I would suggest that it's to the contrary. You know, the agency and the department have supported this program for a long number of years, and I think what we've come to realize is that not only does it provide an important piece of nutrition assistance for the members of each of your tribes, it's also become an important part, in some ways, in the culture of your tribes.

You know, I think what we're interested in doing is understanding. You know, as Dana and others have said, things have changed over the last 20 years since we've taken an in-depth look at the program. And I think we need to understand what is the program right now and how is it different than what it was 20 years ago, and have the policies that we've all put in place, working with you and everybody else, have the policies we've put in place kept up with the changes? And, if not, what changes do we need? So we're not going into this with the notion that there's a case to be made to get rid of the program in any way, shape, or form. As a matter of fact, I think what we're going into this with is the notion that there are probably things that we don't fully recognize that we need to do in order to make the program stronger and better meet your needs and the needs of the people in your tribes.

Thank you, Tim.

Okay.

That's all I have for now. Thank you very much, everybody, for listening.

Thank you, Red, for joining us again.

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

Our next one is from Trista Winnett [PH]. Your line is open.

Yes. Red basically touched on my suggestion was to talk to some of the people that have left the program and went to food stamps or, for some other reason, have left the program to find out what caused them to leave in the first place, that was a suggestion I had. And, like I said, Red pretty much touched on that and that question was answered. And also a suggestion, we have some of our clients that – or potential clients that are over income for our program, and for some reason or another, you know, they still – they can't make ends meet. Take, for example, your elderly on a fixed income, household of two, both of them drawing the maximum of SSI, social security, general assistance, or age of the disabled, they're going to be over income for this program, but yet their medical costs and their cost of living, they have very little to live on. And, you know, then again, we're looking at your income, guidelines need to be addressed and maybe the demographics of those households need to be taken into consideration as well.

Great. Thank you, Trista, for your comments.

Thank you.

Tony has another response. Your line is open.

Good afternoon again. I listened to my fellow colleague, Red. Agree with him on a lot of his comments. One of the things that I'd like to – in terms of this is that some of your demographics, some of your information you have is already there, it's in your AIS system. If you take a look at the AIS, it's quite extensive, guys. The problem is is that all you get is the 152s. You need to look at that AIS for what it can generate and what you can access and do an analysis on it. It's very good. It gives you a lot of this.

Now my issue that I'm listening to is that when you're looking at the tribes, you're looking at selecting based on large, medium, and small. That's good for an initial criteria, but when you're looking at trying to get the information back from the people you need to also look at these tribes as to how and where we serve them and what it takes. You know, there's some of us that do tailgate distributions, and how do we serve these people, why do we serve these people, and what their views are on it, because if you just go a large, medium, and small, you're going to miss it. And I would be remiss if I didn't stand up for doing small tribes.

The thing on my fellow small tribes is that one of the things that affects them is availability of goods. We have some small tribes who five cases of food could serve them for a long, long time. So, you know, you have to really sit down and look at that. And I appreciate listening to Mr. O'Connor and Laura and Mr. Rasmussen on your comments, but one of the other things, then I'll get off the phone, is that I know in this case, in talking to me, I'm a direct provider. There's not someone in between me and that tribal person that comes in here. You know, I certify them. I go on down the line. I

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

give them the food. I help deliver it to their homes on home deliveries. And a large, large majority of the program directors on this conference call do that. So, you know, don't be looking at us as sitting in the office and playing around with our computers and directing everybody. That would be a false impression of what goes on in this program. I know Mr. O'Connor has visited several tribes. So we actually provide the service. So don't be afraid to ask us, we know. Okay. Thank you very much for the time.

Yeah, thanks a lot. I think that's why there are site visits as part of this project because we know that the people who operate this program are very close to the ground in terms of what's going on and can provide a lot of information to us, so we appreciate that.

Thank you, Tony.

We have no other comments at this time.

Okay. Thank you all so much for all your questions and comments. We'll go ahead now and move on to part three of today's consultation, and I'll introduce Dana Rasmussen to cover the next steps of the study.

Well, thanks, Barbara, and thank you for all your comments. This has been very useful and I think this is a good starting point for the study. There has been a great deal of information to absorb over the course of this call, so we do appreciate your patience. And at the end of this presentation you'll see an email address that you can email us comments or questions, if you like, and we'd encourage you to do so. We know we can't answer every question, and some individuals might not want to comment during the session, and that's fine. Any time you want to share a comment, feel free to do so.

In addition, we don't view these consultation calls as the be all, end all of the discussion regarding this study. We wanted to let you know that with the permission of the NAFDPIR board the Urban Institute will provide an update on the study at this summer's annual conference, it's going to be held the week of June 24th in Niagara Falls.

Now in the future, Laura mentioned this briefly, we plan to conduct consultation sessions with those tribes selected to participate in the study sample. We're hoping to conduct those consultation sessions both in-person and via conference call. Those dates haven't been announced or set yet, but look for those sessions to take place after the study sample is selected. We'll keep you informed regarding the dates of those sessions once we have further information.

Of course, when we work the schedule of these consultation sessions we will respect the scheduled conferences, meetings, cultural events to the extent we know about them or find out about them. And we'll be talking to the NAFDPIR community as well just to make sure that we're not missing something. We'll also keep the program community in the loop with regard to progress on the study. We'll have FDPIR-related conference calls and we'll have our website to convey information to you. Of course, there's always

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

e-mail, and we'll give you the link or links to any information that we post. With that being said, I want to thank you again for your participation and input today, and we do want to open it up again for further consultation right now. You've had a bit more time to let all of this information sink in. Thank you.

So we'll go ahead and stop there. And, once again, as a reminder, it's "*1" on your phone if you have a question or a comment.

We have one from Greg. Your line is open.

Oh, yeah, thanks. Good morning. It's still five minutes to noon here in Anchorage, Alaska. I would like to ask or follow up on some of what I've already heard with regard to focus group participation and how that's going to be used in the study. I just was curious how are you going to guarantee participation rates among former FDPIR participants who go over to SNAP? And if you don't or are unable to receive participation from former FDPIR participants, how is that going to skew the study, if at all?

Well, thank you for the question. The former what we're calling "potentially eligible FDPIR participants" would only be included in the focus groups on the site visits, not in the survey samples, so it doesn't affect the national estimates. In terms of participation of those individuals in the focus groups, we're going to enlist, again, the help of the tribes, not only people that they may know through former FDPIR participation but also food banks, other food programs, on or near the reservation that might help to recruit potentially eligible FDPIR participants to be involved in those focus groups. So we're hoping that we'll be able to do that. We were able to do that on a much smaller study we did, and it was quite successful, so I hope that happens again. And they will -- everyone who does participate in the focus group will be getting a small incentive payment or gift card, so we hope that will encourage participation.

Thank you.

Thank you, Greg.

Once again, if anyone on the phone would like to ask a question or make a comment, please press "*1" and record your name at this time. We have a comment from Joe Bluehorse. Your line is open.

Yeah, I checked in with the call in. I've talked with the people here at Pine Ridge and most of the people are wondering would the food that was taken away going to be given back into the program, the food that was taken away like the butter, syrup stuff that the people used to cook with, lard?

Hey, Joe, this is Laura Castro. With regard to your question, we just had an in-person meeting with our FDPIR Food Package Workgroup last month and we had a lot of

USDA
Tribal Consultation
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
January 26, 2012

discussions and came up with kind of a prioritized list of products that we want to look at. Some of them are products that were removed from the food package, and we are discussing those and haven't yet reached a final conclusion on them. But we have a prioritized list of items that we are considering for introduction into the FDPIR food package.

I think that we would get a lot of participants coming back into the program if they knew that this food was going to be put back into the program.

Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Joe.

Okay.

And we have no other comments or questions at this time.

Thank you all so very much for all your questions and comments throughout today's consultation session. I'd like to hand it over now to Mr. Tim O'Connor for some closing remarks.

Thanks, Barbara. And thank you all for joining us today. I want to thank the folks in the room here with me for taking the time to walk through this study and stuff, but especially thank all of you for taking the time in your busy days to give us your thoughts and drink in a little bit about what this is.

I want to go back to what I was saying before about the study itself. I don't want to overemphasize the importance of this study, but I want you to understand that it is an important study for not only the agency and the department, but it's really for the entire community, if I can be bold enough to say that we're part of this whole FDPIR community with you. Like I said, things have changed in 20 years, and we all know that. We need to have the facts and the foundation to understand what kinds of changes we need to be making in the program itself to make it a stronger program, to better meet the people on your reservations and in your communities who are in need of nutrition assistance. That's what it's really all about. There's a lot of people who are barely scratching by, and if it isn't for this program, they are going to be in very bad shape. So we want to make sure that the program is meeting their needs as best as they can.

So I hope that as we go down the road and we get farther along in the selection process of the tribes and everything else that we'll be able to count on your for support as we move forward. If you have any questions, there's all sorts of venues that you've got through websites and stuff to be able to ask them. And we'll be trying to reach out to you through any kind of venue that we can to make sure that we stay in touch and keep you apprised of what's going on. So this is, you know, maybe just sort of the first shot across the bow on this, but we want to make sure that we stay in touch and that we work closely with you as we proceed through the course of this study. Thank you very much for taking time today.

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That does conclude today's conference call. We thank you all for participating. You may now disconnect. And have a great rest of your day.