

USDA
Study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
Webinar & Conference Call
January 10, 2013

Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the question-and-answer session please press “*1” on your touch tone phone. Today’s conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. And now I will turn the meeting over to Mr. Steven Carlson, consulting official, sir, you may begin.

Thank you very much, and welcome to all of you who have joined us at this event. Thank you for joining us for today’s consultation meeting on the study of the food distribution program on Indian reservations. This is the fourth of our consultations with travel representatives on this important study.

My name is Steven Carlson. I am an associate administrator here at the Food & Nutrition Service, part of the Department of Agriculture. And as indicated, I will be your consulting official for this afternoon. I want to, again, welcome all of you who have joined us as we consult with you on what we think to be a very important study of the operations of Food Distribution Program on Indian reservations.

I’d like to start by doing some introductions with the staff who have joined me here today. We will then get to each of you who have joined us over the phone as well. We’ll start by sharing with you who we have here at the FNS national office. I am joined by both FNS staff and our research team from the Urban Institute, NORC, Support Services International or SSI.

Let me start by telling you just a little bit about myself and my role here at FNS. I’ve been part of this agency well over 35 years at this point, and currently am in a position as the associate administrator, responsible for policy support. In that role, I have responsibility for the development and management of the agency’s policy research, and analysis agenda that covers all 15 nutrition assistance programs that we operate. The study that we’re here to consult on this afternoon is one of many studies that are in that portfolio.

I’d like now to go around the room and get folks who have joined me to introduce themselves as well.

My name is Bob Dalrymple. I’m in the office of research and analysis. I’m a project officer, overseeing the contract we have with the Urban Institute.

Hi I’m Dana Rasmussen. I’m with the chief of the policy branch of food distribution division here at the Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service.

Hi, I’m Laura Castro, and I’m director of the food distribution division with USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

Hello, I’m Nancy Pindus. I’m the project director for the Urban Institute for this study. Glad to be here.

At this point we want to do the introductions with everyone who has joined us on the phone. I’ll ask Barbara Lopez to remind us about the information and how you can participate in those introductions and ask Barbara as well to cover some additional information on the process for today’s meeting, including the agenda and the materials that we’ve made available. Barbara.

Great. Thank you, Steven. Hi, everyone. My name is Barbara Lopez, and I work for the Food Distribution Division here at FNS. And I would like to now invite all of our tribal leaders and tribal member who are on the phone to join us for introductions by pressing “*1” on your phone. Today’s consultation meeting is being recorded, and it will be part of the official consultation record; thus, we want to make sure we capture your name and your tribe for that record. So once again, if you press “*1” on your phone you can join us for introductions. And operator, we’re ready for the first introduction, please.

Certainly. Linda Walker, your line is open, go ahead please.

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Oh, this is Linda with the Yakama Nation and Tribal Commodity Foods Program and I'm the program manager, and I have a couple of delegates in here from and for the Yakama Tribal Council, and I'll let them introduce themselves.

Good morning. Phillip Ambrose, working with the tribal administration for Yakama Nation.

Good morning. This is Jonathan Lamer from Human Services Administration, Yakama Nation.

And that's all that I have.

Great. Wonderful. Welcome, Yakama. Thank you for joining us.

Thanks. Thank you.

Michael Pierre, your line is open.

This is Michael Pierre with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes. I am the program director. Thank you.

Thank you for joining.

Ms. Templer, your line is open.

Arlene Templer, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Montana. DHR department head.

Great. Wonderful. Thank you for being here.

Elaine Lane, your line is open.

Good morning. This is Elaine Lane, Lummi Nation program director, and I have Frank Morris who is my assistant here today.

Thank you. Good morning, and thank you for coming.

Mr. Sam, your line is open. Gordon Sam, program director Mississippi Choctaw Food Distribution Program.

Hi. Thank you for coming.

Thank you.

Ms. Cruce, your line is open.

Hello. Anna Cruce, program manager for the Muscogee Creek Nation.

Hi, Anna. Welcome. Thank you.

Mr. Nertoli, Your line is open.

Good afternoon. Tony Nertoli, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indian.

Hi, Tony, thanks for coming.

And if you did press “*1,” your line is open. Please check your mute button. You may go ahead.

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This is Melinda Newport. I'm director of nutrition services with the Chickasaw Nation.

Hi, Melinda. Thank you.

This is Roxanna Newsome, manager of Chickasaw Nation and NAFDPIR president.

Wonderful. Hi ,Roxanna. Thanks for joining.

Hi, Barbara. Thank you, and at this time, I'm showing no one further.

Okay. Thank you so much, operator, and thank you everyone for joining us with introductions. We're going to now move on to cover some logistics. Today's meeting is a web meeting with an audio conference line. If you are joining us on the webinar you should see a slide on your computer. We're currently on slide number three. We also provided all of the materials today, which you can access through the webinar tool. There is a little icon on the upper right-hand corner of you screen. It looks like three little pieces of paper, and if you click on that little icon you'll be able to download today's materials. But we did e-mail out all of today's materials so you should have them in your e-mail. And we are going to be taking comments and questions throughout today's meeting by pressing "*"1" on your phone, just like we did during today's introductions.

Okay, we're going to move on now to the presentation outline, and I'll hand it over to Mr. Steven Carlson.

Perfect. Thank you, Barbara. For those of you who are joining us only on audio, we've now moved on to slide number four if you want to follow along. The purpose of today's consultation meeting is to consult with each of you on the study of the Food Distribution Program on Indian reservations, to review the details of that study, and to share with you how we propose to understand and conduct this project.

Today we will also discuss tribal involvement and consult with you on the approval process to properly conduct this study on your reservation. By way of background, let me just say every year FNS is appropriated money from congress to perform a variety of research studies and evaluations on many of our nutrition assistance programs. The particular study we're talking about today is of particular importance to us. The last time that we conducted a national study of FDPIR was way back in 1990, about 23 years ago. Since then, there have been lots of significant changes that have occurred in the program, including changes to eligibility rules, the kinds of foods offered, food delivery options.

This study is intended to help us understand nationally who is being served by FDPIR and how we can make better decisions about the program to improve those services. It almost goes without saying, but I do feel compelled to say that we do see FDPIR as a critical program in our inventory of nutrition assistance for the people that we reach and serve. There have been lots of improvements to this program over the last 23 years, none of which could have been accomplished without the dedication and commitment from FDPIR program directors, their staff, members of the national association of FDPIR, and program participants.

We've undertaken this study because we know how critical the program is to communities across this country. This study is going to help us identify ways to make the program work better for participants and for those of you who are actually responsible for administering it. It will also give us more descriptive information that we can use in support of the program when we talk to members of congress about how it operates and who it serves. This could, just by way of background, help us in present our budget request to the congress, help us make the case for opportunities for additional funding and pilot projects and grants and those kinds of things.

I know that many of you who are joining us today are very familiar with FDPIR. It provides monthly food assistance and nutrition education to approximately 276 tribes, through 100 Indian tribal organizations, and five state agencies. Our goal with this project is to provide a nationwide picture of those operations. However, given the normal resource constraints that affect all of us, not every Indian tribal organization

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who currently administers FDPIR will be part of the study. Our research team will touch a bit more on this as we proceed with this discussion. But the bottom line is that we've obtained a representative sample of about 25 Indian tribal organizations that have been identified to participate, and we'll use that information to make inferences about how the program is working across the country.

Today's consultation meeting is to share with you some more specific details of the study with especially the tribes that have been invited to participate, to answer any questions you might have, to get your feedback on our plans, and hopefully to confirm your tribe's willingness to participate with us in this endeavor. We have a lot of ground to cover so I'm going to stop and get us started. I'll hand it over to Dana Rasmussen, part of the Food Distribution Division here at FNS, who has been involved with the study from the start, and ask Dana talk to us about the purpose of the study. And then we will turn it over to Nancy Pindus from the Urban Institute to take us from that point. Dana.

Thanks, Steve, and welcome every to consultation today. As Steve mentioned there hasn't been a full-scale study done on FDPIR since over two decades ago, and a great deal has changed with the program since then. Now this includes, as Steve mentioned, changes to delivery options, foods offered, nutrition education, eligibility rules and demographics.

With regard to this new FDPIR study, our goal is to get the information necessary to continue to improve the program. We've invested a great deal in the study, separate from FDPIR program resources, and with the idea that this research is going to provide the latest information that we need to help make informed decisions about the program. And in turn, we want to help make the program better for participants and program operators.

To give you an idea of the scope of the FDPIR national study, we want to obtain an updated profile of how household and individuals that currently participant in FDPIR, including their participation in other programs. We want to evaluate FDPIR's contributions to participants' food supply. We know that FDPIR contributes greatly to individuals' daily needs but we want to quantify that. We also want to quantify the extent to which FDPIR participants switch between FDPIR and SNAP. This would include determining the main reasons for movements between the two programs. And we want to explore the reasons why fewer individuals are now participating in FDPIR.

We hear anecdotally, of course, that the level of average monthly per-person value of SNAP benefits in comparison to FDPIR is a primary cause; however, participation in FDPIR has been declining for some time. We want to quantify all the potential reasons for the participation decline. And we want to obtain descriptive information on key aspects of FDPIR operations. And, particularly, we want to know what's changed 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 in helping us to determine program needs.

We want to ascertain the resources devoted to nutrition education and the format of the information provided directly to FDPIR participants; in other words, what does work best with available funding. We want to identify factors that affect program managers' decisions on which FDPIR foods are ordered and offered. We want to learn more about approaches used to distribute food packages to participants and why they are selected. We know, for example, about the grocery store concept, which has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, and data would be very useful for us to show the advantages of this concept. Of course, we know some of these answers already, but to really document what works and what doesn't, we just need to go out and quantify it. And finally, we want to ascertain participant satisfaction with administrative practices, how we administer FDPIR, and the food package. This will let us know if we need to make changes that would positively impact participants.

Regarding study benefits, I've already touched briefly on this. We want to obtain current information to help us make decisions about how to better administer the program. In particular, we want to identify the needs of participants and identify ways to make the program better for participants. We may obtain information that cannot only help us make the program better for participants but FDPIR Indian tribal

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organizations or ITOs and state agencies as well. And we also obtain information representative of all FDPIR Indian tribal organizations and state agencies, which we can then share with the program community. We not only want to conduct this study with your input but we want to share the information obtained from this study with you. We view this as a study that will not only benefit USDA but all FDPIR programs.

An example that I can provide to you, we do work with the FDPIR food package workgroup, which consists mainly of program directors and nutritional professionals appointed by the national association of FDPIR. If we learn from the study that participants are not satisfied with some aspect of the food package we can work with the workgroup to change that. In addition, if the study finds that we should change something in our program regulations or policy to help the program run more smoothly or benefit participants, we have the supporting data we need to make that case. We could then work with the program community to see what would and wouldn't work again.

With that being said, I'd like to again thank you for participating in this call. Nancy Pindus from the Urban Institute will speak for a few minutes and provide an overview of the study. After that, we'll open up the session for any questions, comments, or input that you may have.

Thank you, Dana. My name is Nancy Pindus. I'm the principle investigator of this study at the Urban Institute. I had the pleasure of meeting some of you at some of the in-person consultations that we just had, and I just want to let you know how pleased we are to be working on this study. The Urban Institute, with support Services International, SSI, conducted a much smaller study of the FDPIR program in 2008 and 2009, so we had one full cooperation from a really dedicated group of FDPIR directors and staff and were supported by their tribal leader, so we really look forward to working with you again and providing information that will improve the program for ITOs and participants.

On your handouts now we're going to move to slide nine. I'm just going to introduce the study team. Walter Hillabrant, if you just want to say hello, has just joined us from SSI.

Good morning.

And Carol Hafford is joining us by telephone. You want to say hi, Carol.

Hello.

Thank you. So the Urban Institute is a nonprofit research organization based in Washington, D.C. Other names you will hear as we go on working with you throughout the study are Diane Levi and Chris Narducci at the Urban Institute. NORC at the University of Chicago is a premier survey research organization. They have offices in Chicago and Bethesda. Carol, who is heading up the survey effort, is in the Bethesda office, and Suzanne Bard [ph], who I think is on also, is working closely with us on the survey, and she's in the Chicago office. Walter worked with us on the last FDPIR study. He owns FSI, which is a native American owned research firm in Silver spring Maryland, and Walter is a Citizen Potawatomi Tribe and is going to be a really important component for our site visits, as much of the analysis, so hope you'll get to know us and be happy working with us all the way through.

Moving on to slide ten, one of the points here is to get a national profile of participants in FDPIR, so it's really to give information that can be used to improve the program and to provide the latest information to help make informed decisions about the program. So in terms of a profile, we want to learn about demographic characteristics, household composition, employment, economic hardship, and eligibility.

Just as an example, we don't know the number of seniors who are participating in the program nationally, relative to other age groups. You might know this for your program but FNS needs this information on a national level to help make better decisions about the kinds of foods offered, eligibility requirements, and food delivery methods. And then we'll also be able to use this to compare to earlier data on the program

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to see things that have changed, the nature of change of participants over time and how the program can best serve the current profile participants.

Key topics that we're going to be asking about, this is on page 11, will be collected to show how the program affects participants. So we'll ask participants about how they store and prepare foods, how they pick up or acquire food, and maybe barriers to accessing the food benefits, such as distance from the FDPIR distribution site, their transportation options, and things like that. Also, there is other sources of food and the role that FDPIR plays in their overall food consumption at home, and what factors influence participation in FDPIR and other related programs.

Program information will also be gathered during this study, so in addition to asking participants what their situation is and what their preferences are, we are going to also be talking with program directors and staff about FDPIR program operations, such as the nature of nutrition education activities and the factors that influence those activities, including whether they have nutrition education grants and what kinds of activities in terms of nutrition and other health issues they might coordinate with other programs such as WIC and SNAP. Also, the variety of ways that the grantees distribute food to identify the food distribution methods, advantages, and disadvantages, and any promising practices that can be shared with others.

We'll identify factors affecting participation in the program in general, as well as reasons for decreases and increases in participation of particular sites. Administrators have selected staff preferences about the factors affecting the program participation will complement what we hear from the participants because we know that the program directors probably have some ideas and insights as to this, as well as participants.

Just briefly going to go through what our tentative timeline is. This is the last of the consultations about the study. That doesn't mean by any means that it's the last time you'll hear from us, but it is the last formal consultation. We prepared a study plan, we pretested the instruments, and that was just completed in December, and we are working and consulting with tribes. And what has to be done on these studies is for any data collection to occur, the data collection requests have to be approved by the Office of Management and Budget, and that package has now be put together and will be submitted. It's being reviewed at FNS and then will be submitted to OMB with the hope then that data collection can begin starting in August of 2013.

In addition to these consultations, we gave a presentation about the study at the annual NAFDPIR meeting in Niagara Falls. We're hoping to do another presentation in Denver this year, kind of an update on the study. And we're certainly going to have an ongoing conversation in terms of the outreach as we begin the data collection, and before we even get started on data collection.

While there's not a formal process for tribes to review the drafts of the final report, you'll be kept updated all the way through on the progress of the study by staff and on the FNS website. Your input is appreciated, both on the materials that you can see on the website now in terms of the draft instruments on the study design, but also when we are doing site visits we'll be asking tribe that is we visit to review for accuracy some sections that we write up to make sure we got it right when we were out onsite. And there will be more discussions about how to best talk about review dissemination and discussions of the report as the study moves forward.

That final report is expected to be completed in late 2014. It's going to combine the findings across all of the sites in the study, and it will include lots of examples of some programs. It's also going to include and be combined with this new data direction with other information we have from FNS in terms of administrative data on participants and census data on eligible populations. And we'll be summarizing the findings and the lessons learned from all components of the project in this report. And then we'll be working and FNS will be working to develop various opportunities to access, share, and discuss the report, including posting it on the website and arranging stakeholder meetings.

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I think we will pause now and see if there's any questions, and Barbara can give us some instructions about how to do that.

Great. Thank you, Nancy. And to ask a question or make a comment, you can press “*1” on your phone, and the operator will help us in connecting your phone line. So, again, that's “*1” on your phone line. And, operator, we'll queue you, please.

Thank you, and like she said, press “*1” on your phone, and please un-mute your phone and record your name when prompted. It will be just one moment please. And I do not show anything at this time.

Okay, thank you, operator. We'll move on to the next section, and we'll stop again for consultation.

Okay, great, thanks. There will be more opportunities if you think of questions, so please keep that in mind. This next section, starting on slide 16, we're going to provide a description of the project, the data we plan to collect, and how the information will be combined, and what we hope to learn. We're going to give you some time to make comments after that, and then we'll be discussing in more detail actually how we'll be working with tribes to collect the data.

The first thing, this is slide 17, is that the study is being done on a sample, nationally representative sample of participating households in 25 FDPIR programs, and it's because we need to do a national study but there just is not the time and resources to go to every single participating tribe. Everyone would love for that to happen, but it's just not possible. And so there is way of doing a sample by certain sampling factors so that the data that we collect is representative of the national picture of tribes participating in FDPIR.

So the sample considers size, meaning the proportion -- the number of households that are participating in the FDPIR program. The region of the country, meaning the FNS region that the program is located in, as well as we looked at program participation trends so we could make sure the sample included tribes that had decreasing participation, tribes that had increasing participation, and tribes that have remained about the same in the past ten years. So we really try to be representative and get something that would get us the national picture. And because it's a national picture it's really not going to give a really detailed program of any one tribe. It's going to be a discussion at the national level of what the profile of participants look like.

Just a couple of other factors in the sampling, we did include the six largest ITOs in the study, and then the others were selected by probability proportionate to the size of the program, and then we considered the growth trends as well. It means that there are small programs that will be represented but, again, in proportion to their numbers of participating households, so that we get enough participants when we go into the survey at those sites. And we'll never discuss the information that we gather in terms of a single tribe, again, because it's a national study and a national sample.

On the next slide, on slide 18, what the sample will be used for will be to review case records for a sample of selected participants and to conduct a survey of participants in the selected sites, so that's the 25 sites. And we'll be working with the tribes and ITOs to select the sample of participants at each site. Carol is going to go into a little more detail about how that will work out, working case by case with each tribe.

There is a handout on the website just explaining sampling some more, which sort of helps you understand the process that's done when you try and draw a national sample. In addition, the survey and site visits are available on that website for you to see.

In terms of sources of information, and this is a big picture of the whole study on slide 19, we'll be also looking at census and other data, looking at demographic and socio-demographic factors that might be related to changes in participation. Also, FNS has administrative data to provide information on participation over time, the good benefit levels, and any changes in eligibility rules. We also are going to

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be doing some simulation modeling, comparing FDPIR and SNAP on eligibility and program rules to see where there are certain bans of income or other eligibility criteria where certain people might find it more beneficial because of the way the rules are to participate in either SNAP or FDPIR to help to understand what healthy implications that might have.

And then the new data that's going to be collected for the study will include three components; the case record reviews, participant surveys, and then site visits to a smaller number of the tribes. The data collection instruments that I mentioned, they have been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget, and not only will they be reviewing it and FNS be reviewing but that also provides the public to review those instruments again. So all of the tribes that have participated in these consultations have gotten a chance to see the instruments on the website and can give us any comments. But there will be an extended period now through the Office of Management and Budget to also respond to any comments that you might have, so please look them over. We welcome your suggestions. It's not final yet, so we do encourage you to give some thought to each of them.

I'm going to describe briefly each of the components, the new data collection components, and then hand it over, first to Carol Haffert and then to Walter to discuss in detail the data collection activity.

The case record reviews, these were our case records that will be reviewed for each household that's selected for the survey. The purpose is to get information that will describe the current participants and their characteristics. This is information that comes from what you already collect and need to include in your case records, and the idea is if we can get it from there we don't have to ask all that detail to participants when we survey them. So we'll be starting with the case record to get that information, things like the presence of elders and children in the household, changes in income, other benefit that is available to households.

This is going to happen in 25 sample sites. There will be about 32 records reviewed at each site with a little more at the larger sites. NORC staff is going to work with each tribe or ITO to construct that case review to make sure to respect tribal procedures in terms of data collection methods, confidentiality, privacy. All those will be discussed individually with each tribe to make sure we're honoring their procedures.

Since many of the programs do use paper records, the case review will usually involve somebody coming to the FDPIR office, a researcher, to abstract the participant information from the record. Now all of this information will be carefully protected to maintain participants' privacy, and then the information that we do obtain will be used for a national profile, not to track or identify individuals.

Next is the participant surveys; that's slide 21. The topics that we're going to cover in that survey include participation in FDPIR and other nutrition assistance programs, access to food stores, facilities for storing, and preparing food, and the participants' perspective on FDPIR. It will be a way for participants to share their thoughts and suggestions about the FDPIR program in their community. We'll be asking heads of household to participant and about 32 interviews will be completed at each site, either in person or by telephone, with a larger number of interviews at the larger sites.

An NARC field interviewer will be assigned to the site to conduct the interviews, and the interview participants who are in the survey, their identity will be kept confidential. And the field interview will be working with the tribe to develop the best way to do this. Sometimes people prefer an in-person, sometimes by telephone, so all of those considerations will be worked into the plan that the field interview works out with that site to assure that confidentiality is maintained and to work with tribes if they perhaps would prefer a tribal member to be trained and be an interviewer for the site as well.

The last component of the data collection is the site visits. We'll be visiting 17 of the 25 programs in the study to conduct staff interviews and interviews with others whose programs might coordinate with the FDPIR program. At those locations we'll also be conducting discussions groups with FDPIR participants

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and non-participants and touring the facilities. Those who visit in the last FDPIR study have a good sense of what we mean by this.

I know people are probably saying, "Well how are you picking the 17 of the 25?" We'd love to go to all 25, but, again, our resources prohibit that, so we have not actually chosen the 17 of the 25. We're going to just try in the sample we select to capture the most diversity that we can across those sites, so we'll be considering the size of the program, the region, the FNS region, the economy at that particular site, participation changes so we could have, again, sites that had increases and decreases, as well that those that have remained the same, and also looking at variations in program administration, whether it's a tribally-administered, whether it's state-administered program served, a number of tribes who are single tribe, whether it has one distribution site or many, how big an area they have to cover, so trying to get a diversity across all of those kinds of factors. During those site visits, the Urban Institute and SSI will conduct staff interviews and hold discussions groups as well.

Let's see, we will be talking with staff at FNS headquarters, as well as regional staff, to get suggestions for these 17 sites for the site visits to help us decide and think of other criteria that we might need to think about in selecting the sites. Other features we might want to look at is to see what the pickup options are and food delivery options, whether they have fresh produce, what kinds of nutrition education, and health promotion activities that they have.

Now we could pause again, see if you've got any questions or anything you need more information on. Barbara.

Great. Thanks, Nancy. So just as a reminder, we're going to open now for questions and commences. You can press "*1" on your phone. And I do want to mention that the documents that Nancy referenced, the FDPIR draft survey and the site instruments, those documents were included in your e-mail that you received today, as well as the same e-mail that you received earlier this week. They're both under the reference material headline, and those documents are also as part of your handout here on the webinar tool on that little icon on the upper right-hand corner that looks like three little pieces of paper. If you click on that you'll be able to access those documents as well. But they were included as part of your e-mail for your reference as well.

And, operator, we'll queue you please for any questions that we may have on the phone.

Thank you. And, again, please press "*1" to ask a question, remembering to un-mute your phone and record your name. And our first question comes from Mr. Nertoli. Your line is open.

From my perspective, good afternoon. I've got a couple questions and a comment. In terms of a question, okay, compliments, this is so far very comprehensive. Okay, one of the questions I had is looking at our smaller tribes. We have some on a national basis and I know in the Midwest region we have some very small tribes. Are they being considered in this, because they have some different types of demographics and issues that they deal with, as opposed to some of the super big tribes? And the other thing is this, is I haven't heard yet in looking at the stuff, are we including tribes from Alaska in this survey?

You want me to take that?

Sure.

Okay, well there are -- I don't have the numbers in terms of participation for all the tribes here, but there are definitely some smaller tribes in the sample. They, again, because it was done proportionate to size there were fewer smaller tribes in the sample, but there are some smaller tribes in the sample. I'm trying to remember what we -- now Alaska could have been, you know, as all of the other tribes, Alaska sort of got one that's a consortia of programs, so it was eligible to be polled in the sample, but it turns out that it was not in the sample when we do the sample because, again, it is small. So there are some smaller tribes but there are no Alaska tribes.

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Yeah, my question, because of the uniqueness of serving small tribes and Alaska, in fact, all of your tribes are rather unique. Okay, my other question comes back to one I've been raising and that's implementation of all new regulations proposed. Right now I would be less than honest in that USDA doesn't rank real high in customer service because of a couple rules that are still standing that are supposed to be signed, and that's all we get is they're out there being done, and this is in terms of the housing allowances and medical allowance. I know we have some national people on there, Mr. Carlson and Mr. Rasmussen, Mr. Castro, and I would like a final date instead of "Oh, it's coming."

So I thank you very much for that perspective. This is Steven Carlson. I have to confess that many of us who work in the regulatory field here in Washington, D.C. probably share your frustration with the length of time it takes to get final actions on many of our rules. If it were entirely within our personal control it likely wouldn't happen that way. But there are a large number of people who need to sign off and approve these rules, so I while I hear your perspective, I appreciate that, thank you for it, but I have to confess that we are not in a position to give you a firm and final date on any of our regulatory activity.

Okay. And I understand, Mr. Carlson, but you know what, from my perspective there's a lot of people out here hurting. I'm not a secondary or a third or a way down the line administrator, I walk out my door and I certify a person, I'll give them the food or help them, I'll go in the trunk and do that. And, you know, there's a whole thing called "human consideration," not this customer service that's corporate Intel, I'm talking human people that are hurting, and that seems to be being ignored in all this. I just want to make my comment on that. Thank you.

I appreciate that, and I thank you again for your perspective. I'll make sure that it's heard here in Washington.

Thank you. Phillip Ambrose, your line is open.

Good morning. This is Phillip Ambrose of the Yakama Nation. I have an observation in regards to the material that we just covered. There's a use of terminology where the document starts with "Tribe/ITOs" then the document transitions to ITOs. Is that an intent to make certain provisions not applicable to tribes or tribal governments? The Yakama Nation would have a concern that they are a Treaty Tribe, fairly recognized Treaty Tribe and the importance to make sure that the designation of tribal governments is maintained throughout where the provisions apply in the PowerPoint you're providing today.

This is Dana Rasmussen here at USDA Food and Nutrition Service. No, there's not intent to parse out a distinction between the two, although we do recognize there is. What we're trying to say is that, yes, the tribes on the sample list will be included in the study sample. As part of that, FDPIR Indian Tribal Organizations within reservation boundaries will be included in the study.

Thank you. And at this time, I'm showing nothing further.

Okay, thank you, operator. We'll go ahead and move on the next section, please.

Great. Well I'm going to go ahead and pass the baton over to Carol Hafford from NORC, who is going to talk about the next section here of the slides on tribal involvement and how we're going to be working with you for the data collection effort. Carol.

I'm here. Good morning and good afternoon to everyone. I'm Carol Hafford with NORC at the University of Chicago. As was mentioned earlier, I'm located in the Bethesda, Maryland, office and my colleague, Suzanne Bard, who is located in Chicago, we'll be working together get the case record review and the survey off the ground. I'm going to cover a number of slides that address the nature of our outreach and some logistics about the actual data collection. This is an area where we will be asking for your involvement and participation.

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So I'm going to begin by just providing the perspectives that we are committed to respecting tribal sovereignty in the research process, and we are hoping to build partnerships with your tribal leaders, with you as the FDPIR programs, and your staff to conduct this in a way that observes the research regulations that pertain to your community. And also to work in such a way that the study provides a benefit back to you. So we have a quite detailed procedure for conducting outreach and I'm going to be walking you through that. And it would be really important that we obtain your input as we go through these steps.

As Nancy said earlier, the data collection instruments and procedures are currently being reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget. And while we are in that period of review, we're going to be starting our outreach steps so at the time that we gain OMB clearance to begin the study, we'll have worked closely with you about how to do it pertaining to you and your program. So I'm going to turn now to Slide 27, thank you.

The first thing that I want to emphasize is that we're very committed to working with you to ensure that the research enhances community wellbeing and protects the communities from any harmful research. I'd like to emphasize that this is not helicopter research where the research team drops in, and we are committed to working in a way that respects the sovereignty of the research regulation process with your tribes, and whether that involves working through a tribal IRB, any culturally-specific research guidelines that pertain, and then ensuring that the research protocols are also consistent with your tribal value.

We also need to explore with you policies around data sharing so that we respect the confidentiality of data that you work with and that also that we respect the privacy of the individuals that we'll be speaking with. We also need to know any additional requirements for conducting the study so that we do it in a way that is quite transparent and open.

So we will be working with each tribe in each ITO. We understand that many tribes have IRBs or sometimes work with tribal colleges to approve research, so we'll be asking about that and understanding what we need to get certain things working. I believe there, as was mentioned earlier, there is a template approval letter that has been provided on the website, and perhaps in your material that is you received as well, so that you can use to present to your tribal IRB to begin the process of conducting the study, if such a document is needed. I'm going to turn now to slide 28, thank you.

The first step in the outreach and scheduling process is actually what we're doing right now. And what we've done in the past year, in last year's consultation in January, and then the ones that were conducted in different region ins November and December of this year. So we want to build on that, and we heard a lot during the in-person consultations how best to work with the tribes, and we'll been incorporating that into our approach.

In scheduling our outreach with you and then also the data collection itself, we want to make sure that we honor individual community schedules because we understand that there are many cultural events on the calendar, certain rhythms in the community that we understand and sometimes are not amenable to data collection activity, so it would be important if we could learn more about that from your perspective.

We want to allow sufficient time for internal communication on your end, because we understand when we present different aspects of this data collection approach to you, that you need to take it back home to other leaders in your community and have some decision-making discussions about how to proceed, so we want this to unfold in a way that is respectful of your time and the commitments that you need to obtain in order to move forward. And we also will be communicating with NAFDPIR and FNS throughout this process. And the Urban Institute, SSI, NORC team is quite seamless and we will be working together through this outreach process. So we understand that it will take time, and we look forward to beginning to do that with you.

I'm going to proceed now to the outreach step on slide 29. In any of the studies that we conduct it's really important that we gain an understanding of the community that we're working with, and so in the

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meantime we've been doing our research about your tribe's program, history, culture, and we'll be asking you for more information that can inform us about that. It's important that we are able to have this rounded sense of the uniqueness of your community, because when we create our training materials, as skilled interviewers, we want to make sure that they are both sensitive and knowledgeable.

The next outreach step would be to send information to you regarding the study. Much of the information that you would receive is already posted on the FNS website, but we would be able to send you any additional information in the form of, you know, frequently asked questions and such that could help your internal decision making. We'll be doing this, I think, mostly by phone. And sometimes we do have to go onsite and in person, and we are ready to do that as well. But we do see that this will take place over a fairly extended period of time, it a few months it seems, and we'll have a lot of phone and e-mail communication.

Another important dimension of the outreach is to discuss data sharing agreements and to negotiate those with each tribe, because what we'll be needing to do for the case record review is to look at the case record files and be able to abstract information about program participation related to household composition, income sources, ages of people in the household, and so we'll need to establish an agreement about how we do that and how we work with you and how we protect and secure the material. And if you have a special tribal data sharing agreement, then we would use that instrument to enter into an agreement with you.

Another dimension of the outreach is, as I said, to meet with tribal leaders and FDPIR program directors onsite if that's needed, and we're prepared to make presentations before tribal councils or tribal IRB or research committee, or even the community. We've done this in the past for other studies and we'd be ready to do it again for you if that's so needed. So let's turn to slide 30 now.

And the few slides address more of the nuts and bolts and logistics and the case records reviews, and I do want to say that from the prior consultations we've been learning a bit more about the best way to do this. As Nancy Pindus said earlier, the case record review will form the basis of the participant profile. And one of the reasons that we're doing two kinds of data collection is actually to reduce the burden on the participants so that they don't have to answer questions that we can readily obtain that from administrative data sources. And we do have confidence that the information in those case records will be of good quality because we know that that is used for determining eligibility.

So we've had some discussions about the best way to obtain the case record information, and there's essentially three options. One would be doing an electronic data transfer with sites that maintain electronic records; however we understand that not all tribes do this and that a lot of the records are maintained as paper records. So that would involve having to come onsite to do that, and what that would look like is if you have your regional office come in to do a monitoring review, it would look a little bit like that but it would be for a very different purpose, and a member of the NORC team would come onsite and, having a secure laptop with an Excel spreadsheet, would simply enter information from the record, and as I said, regarding household composition, age of household members, various income sources, et cetera. What we would need, though, is to work with you about pulling the sample of those case records, and that's one of the areas of coordination that's necessary.

As Nancy said earlier, we're looking to abstract about 32 records with each tribe or ITO, a bit more in the larger tribes, and depending on the amount of information, our visit could be a day, a day and a half, two days in duration. We might come as one person. We might come as a team to do this. But this is the kind of thing I think that we would learn best from you as we move forward.

The last option is to transmit redacted case records that you would copy and send to NORC through a secure means such as FedEx and for which we would pay for. And negotiated through the data sharing agreement of course, but to send these paper records that we could do the data extraction onsite in our offices. And I think we just need to work through these options. We also want to do this in a way that is least burdensome to you and that would be something that we have to discuss during the outreach.

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Another very important point to make is that any data that's obtained will not be used to individually identify anyone. It all gets aggregated at a very high level, and as was mentioned earlier, it's to really get an understanding of the population served by the FDPIR program.

I'm going to move onto slide 31, which refers to the data collection for the participant survey. As I said, we are trying to reduce the burden on data collection and by using the case record reviews we won't have to ask certain questions in the participant interview. But the way that that would work is we would need to contact each tribe or ITO to obtain a list of participants for the particular reference month. The reference month would be one month selected in the coming year, where we would do the data collection so that we understand the participation at that point in time. We understand, too, that there's changes, sometimes month to month as well.

So we would also then work with you to develop a sampling frame for each site-specific, tribal-specific sample, and in saying that, what I mean is we would need to have a list of households served by FDPIR and then be able to select, randomly, names on that list so that we can abstract the case records and then have the household that is represented in the case record be the household that responses to the survey. So we're trying to coordinate this piece of the data collection.

We would be available to provide technical assistance to you to draw that sample on your own if you wish. We would work with your with our statisticians to help you draw that sample, so that's another thing that we would be addressing as we engage in outreach, what would be the best way to do this and how do we do this in a way that doesn't create a burden for you, but at the same time might help with building different capacities around participating in studies in the future so that you could do this on your own.

Okay, I'm going to now turn to slide 32. And here are some of the ways that we foresee that FDPIR can assist with the participant surveys, and essentially it's important to help create general awareness around data collection like this, and also for community disclosure purposes, for observance of human subject research protections that people in the community are aware of what's go on and the purpose of the study, why it's important, how the information would be used, and what's the benefit of doing it. I think those reasons were discussed earlier, but this information would all be presented in a brochure that could be distributed at each FDPIR program site.

And just to help build awareness in the community, we have a draft brochure that was created. I believe it's also on the FNS website. And we can tailor that if you wish. If you prefer a different language, that could be used, if you prefer different pictures, things like that, because we just want to make sure the information that is shared is meaningful to your community.

I want to say a little bit now about the field interviewer process. Any time that a respondent take part in an interview there is an informed consent process that needs to take place first, and we'll be obtaining consent from all the respondents prior to data collection. We'll also be working with you to ensure that we get the appropriate language so that it's meaningful and easy to understand. And we'll be reading the statement prior to initiated the interview, and then asking questions to ensure that the respondent has understood the purpose of the survey and their role.

We will explain that the respondents can refuse to answer any questions; that they can end their participation at any time. It's voluntary, so we just want to make sure that people are comfortable doing this, because the most important few moments of beginning a survey like this, participating in a conversation about program participation and such, it's really important to build a good rapport with the respondents. So we'll be devoting some time before the interview to do that. We think the interview will take about 40, 45 minutes.

Then to thank the respondent for participating, we're going to be providing a \$25, and that will be in the form of a gift card, which we will consult with you about what's the best form of this card? Is it a voucher to the local store? Is it a gas card? Is it a Wal-Mart gift card, something like that? So we'll make sure that

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we work with you to do something that is, you know, good for your community. We don't want to give someone a gas voucher if it costs more to go get the gas than the voucher is worth. So we just want to be mindful of these kinds of differences across the tribes.

So I'm going to move on now to slide 33. And I think Nancy indicated earlier some of the areas that the survey question will address. But as I said, it's about a 40-minute, 45-minute survey, and it's really going to ask about participation in FDPIR and other nutrition assistance programs, access to food stores, what kind of access to facilities for storing and preparing food, which can be quite different in different cultural communities, and what their perspectives are on FDPIR program delivery, and then also to understand why participants might be switch between FDPIR and food stamps or the SNAP program, and to just get a very fine-grain sense of what those behaviors are and what prompts people to switch.

So I think I've covered the major elements of the data collection with respect to the case record review and the participant survey. I'd be happy to answer any questions when we pause. But right now I'm going to turn it over to Walter Hillebrand from SSI to talk to you about the site visits. Thank you.

Well I'm going to echo everyone else and say good morning and afternoon to everyone again. So we're now on side 34, talking about the site visits. And the purpose of these site visits will be to fill in any information gaps that exist with regard to the general program organization, location of offices and warehouses, to talk to program staff and other community members who the study team should meet, and elements like that.

We anticipate that the site visits will be scheduled several weeks before the actual site visit. And we will make every effort to schedule interviews at the most convenient times for the participating respondents. The site visits will be coordinated with the survey team's outreach for the survey, the actual participant survey and the case file review, so we'll try to coordinate that. The site visits will generally be two to three some days, and as indicated earlier, it will be to the 17 sites, and generally there will be a two-person team, depending on the size of the program. And, as I indicated, this will help us learn about the FDPIR and the other programs on the reservation and nearby areas and to identify different ways that the FDPIR program is administered across different tribes and ITOs. I'll go to the next slide.

This slide shows the kind of a perspective of what we'll be doing at the site visits so that one of the things that we'll try to do and set up and coordinate is interviews with tribal executives, tribal chairmen, chiefs, and so forth, relevant tribal council members, and other elders in the community to talk about the program and their perspectives on the program.

With respect to FDPIR staff, we'll be talking to the administrator or manager, staff responsible for ordering foods, staff that are involved in enrollment and recertification, warehouse management, commodity distribution staff, and nutrition education. Now we recognize that this will vary on the size of the program. Sometimes one person will wear multiple hats, and other programs will be diverse staff with these responsibilities.

But we also want to get a broader context. Food and nutrition are important components of health and well being, and so we'll tie to talk relevant IHF staff or tribally-operated clinic staff to get a sense of their perspective on nutrition-related issues and how they interface with FDPIR or other nutrition programs. And speaking of which, we're going to want to try to talk to -- on the reservation or the participating entity there may well be WIC staff and tribal TANF, so we'll want to talk to see how these programs interface or not with FDPIR.

We recognize that the actual respondents will vary across sites, and we'll be working closely with the tribe or the ITO to identify the appropriate respondents based on the way the program operates at the specific site.

I think we've got one more, going now to slide 36, talking about other activities that go on in the site visits. So we want to get the observations of the program administrators and other staff that are participating,

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and we've found in the past that people will oftentimes be very candid about what they think really works well in the program, and some of that I like to anticipate going into the report is we want to look at success stories and best practices and emerging solutions and so forth, and so these individuals and respondents will be valuable in identifying those things.

Another important thing that we're going to do during the site visits is have discussion groups with FDPIR participants, and if we can reach them, eligible non-participants, so this will complement the participant survey. And it's an opportunity, you know, when people get together in one of these discussion groups, they often kind of bounce off each other. And we found in the prior study, FDPIR study and other work in Indian Country, sometimes it's a little bit slow to warm up, but we've had a lot of success and gotten a lot of valuable information and sometimes a lot of laughs out of things that people in the discussion groups discuss.

There will be at least one discussion group at each site, and some of the larger sites there may be two groups. We anticipate seven to ten individuals, adults, participating in each group, and we'll work together with the FDPIR and other programs to identify these people and see if we can have this all planned when we come.

Some of the things that we'll be doing is actually looking at the facilities. And we're developing a checklist and it's likely to include certain things as what are the schedule of site visits of operation, what's the nature of the storage capacity, looking at nonperishable as well as refrigerated and frozen storage. We'll look at the distribution schedule and the nature of delivery, you know, what kind of vehicles are used, what's the nature of inventory management and this isn't compliance monitoring. We just want to understand how does the program work, and, again, as I indicated before, what are successful and promising practices that get developed that can be shared with other sites.

And so when we talk with the discussion groups, some of the things we'll talk about is, we'll be asking, "Well why did you decide to or decide not to participate in FDPIR or in SNAP as an alternative," and have they even considered those options, and have they ever switched between those two programs, and if so, why? And we are interested in the discussions groups finding out do they participate in nutrition education activities, what source of information do they find worthwhile, and what do think they is a healthy diet and how does that work with their participation in FDPIR. And typically we think those discussion groups will take up to a couple of hours. Do I take the next one?

So just to sum up, we're going to get ready for another chance for you to comment and ask questions. We really, not only today, but as we go forward, we're really interested in your input on strategies for encouraging participation and any areas of potential concern and any other ideas of input that you might. Steve.

Thank you, Nancy, and thanks the all of the presenters this morning this afternoon, today. We will now open, once again, the phone lines for consultation and take your questions and comments and observations that you might have. I do need to say that this is the last opportunity for this session. It's not the last opportunity over the course of the study, but this is the last chance on this call to make any observations or raise any comments to help us think about the project as we go forward. So, Barbara, if you would like to repeat the instructions we're good to go.

Great. Thanks Steven. So once again, to make a comment or ask a question, please press "*1" on your phone line. And, operator, we'll queue you, please, for any questions or comments that we may have.

Yes, thank you. And our first question or comment does come from Phillip Ambrose. Your line is open.

Good morning, Phillip Ambrose with the Yakama Nation. Just an observation in listening to the PowerPoint presentation is a concern, again, recognizing the Treaty obligations and trust responsibility of the United States. And I make that as a platform statement as we consider the potential participation that

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the study and the results do not become the cookie cutter tool that meets the resolution and balancing of the federal deficit and budget.

Yeah, I hear you. Thank you very much. We really value that perspective.

And, again, the mentioning of the treaty from the standpoint, we can talk about congressional appropriations and intent, but with the Yakama Nation having, again, under the Constitution, a treaty that is the supreme law of the land and the trust and responsibility and obligations that we don't forget to make that part of the information provided to congress as FNS competes for funding with the other federal agencies and taking a look at the importance of coordination with the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs and shoring up the common ground for nutrition and food services health education in the wellness of Indians and Indian Country Tribal members.

Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

Thank you, and once again, to ask a question or make a comment or observation, please press “*1” on your touchtone phone. Please un-mute your phone and record your name. One moment. We do have another one coming in. One moment, please. Sam Sang [ph], Your line is open.

Yeah, I was just wondering if -- I was going through this information I was provided with here, and there's a letter, it looks like a form letter, I was just kind of wanting to clear it up. With the tribes that have been selected for the survey, I mean to get things going, you know our tribal side. Is this what we're going to need to be sending in?

Sam, Dana here. Yeah, that form letter is simply an optional template that tribes can use to say, “Hey, yes, we would like to participate in this study, USDA.” This is the letter that informs you of that. So that's an optional document that you can use to essentially say, you know, “USDA, you're welcome to come onto the reservation or site and study FDPIR” consistent with what we provided on the Power Point today.

This is Carol Hafford from NORC. Could I add to that? There will be a series of letters that will be sent out, both from FNS to tribal leaders and FDPIR directors, and then letters from the study team, Urban Institute, NORC, SSI, again, to the tribal leaders and FDPIR directors, to, you know, initiate the process of outreach. And then any internal letters or documentation that you might need, we could work with you to provide that. It's standard procedure in conducting data collections like this to have a series of formal letters and then begin the discussions. So I hope that answers your question.

Yeah, because I was just wondering because I was wondering just kind of like the timeline on that, so that's all the information I was needing on there. I've just got another comment. You know, we get those \$25 gift cards we give those to like one per household a month, I think that might take care of our participation problem right there.

That's good.

I appreciate your creativity and innovation.

Where do I sign up?

Thank you.

Can I just say one more thing about the timeline. So what will happen is when you are contacted for outreach, you know, with each tribe there's a going to be a conversation where you say, or someone will say, “This is the sort of thing that has to go before our tribal council, and then will be sort of instructed. These are the kinds of pieces of information the council needs to see. This is when they meet. You have

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to give them the material to review this number of days before they meet." So, you know, we'll work out the timeline with you.

Thank you. And at this time, I'm showing nothing further.

Okay, thank you, operator. We'll go ahead and move on to the next concluding section.

So before we wrap this up, I need to turn back to Dana to review some of the next steps.

Thank you, Steve. You know, to this isn't the end of us getting input from you on this study. If you do have any additional input after this call, you can e-mail at us at TribalAffairs@FNS.USDA.GOV. That's TribalAffairs@FNS.USDA.GOV. There are handouts, as Barbara mentioned, up in the top. If you click on the little icon there where there's three sheets of paper, there are handouts associated with that, and you did receive them as part of the e-mails that came to you, notifying you and reminding you of this consultation time. So take a look at those handouts. Included in those handouts were some the draft to data collection instruments, and take a look at those. And feel free to provide any input that you on those. There will be, once cleared, a formal public comment period as well, so it wouldn't be the only opportunity that you have.

Expect to be contacted by the Urban Institute and its partners to discuss the study on the reservation. You'll be getting some written communications this winter with regard to that. And then what we're looking to do and what the researchers are looking to do is begin the approval process for on site visits. There is that template letter option that Sam spoke of if you go to the handouts. We drafted up something that you can use and plug in the relevant names and information. And, of course, there, of course, are other options to. We know that you might have a standard approval letter. There might be a tribal council resolution that needs to be made and drafted, so we understand that. That's just a template option that you can use. We do plan to provide an update as to where we stand at the June National Association of FDPIR conference. That's in Denver. And we're hoping that researchers can begin the data collection on or around August.

Thank you, Dana. And I want to extend my personal gratitude to all of you who invested a significant part of your day to spend this time with us. We've shared an awful lot of detailed information. I suspect it may be hard to absorb all at once, which is why we encourage you to think about this and continue to provide us your comments and suggestions as we proceed down this path. I especially want to thank the research team who provided us all those details and, and a final thank you to all of you who had comment or questions or suggestions during our call.

I take all of the participation in this dialogue and just another example of how important this study can be to the program and the people it serves, and it will help put us on a good path in the years ago. So, again, I appreciate all your participation. Thank you very much. And I hope you enjoy the balance of your day.

Thank you for your participation on today's conference call. You may disconnect at this time.