

REN-19-008: Opposition to USDA FNS Regional Realignment of WIC State Agencies and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
Sponsor: Inter Tribal Association of Arizona

Summary:

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) intends to realign regional offices for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) state agencies and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) programs.
- Resolution REN-19-008 addresses USDA-FNS' failure to conduct tribal consultation before realigning its regional offices, as required by E.O. 13175, USDA consultation policies and the United States' tribal trust responsibility.

Issue:

On March 14, 2019, FNS informed WIC state agencies and FDPIR programs that the regional offices would be realigned. This realignment means that the Navajo Nation and Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. would be moved from the Western Region to the Southwest Region. No prior notice was given and FNS did not conduct tribal consultation.

The impacts of this realignment include burdening regional offices by removing or adding Indian Tribal Organizations (ITO)-State Agencies, losing the longstanding collaborative partnerships made over more than two decades, and Regional Operational Adjustment funding may be at risk. The regional offices in the Southwest Region will be strained by the addition of two ITO-State Agencies and the Inter Tribal Council of Nevada will be the only ITO-State Agency remaining in the Western Region.

Without consultation, the USDA will weaken ITO-State Agency trust in USDA, diminish FNS customer service to ITO-State Agencies by disrupting program operations, and jeopardize funding. The proposed realignment of FNS Regional Offices is expected to go into effect in fiscal year 2020.

Action:

REN-19-008, urges USDA to place the realignment on hold until USDA engages in formal tribal consultation.

For additional information, please contact Jacob Schellinger at jschellinger@ncai.org or Brittany Habbart at bhabbart@ncai.org.

Resolution Action Plan: REN-19-008

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Action Plan:

- 30 Days:
 - Research and familiarize oneself with resolution subject area.
 - Evaluate legislative and executive branch advocacy opportunities.
 - Contact sponsors to coordinate requested assistance.
 - Contact other affected tribal organizations for potential partnerships.
- 60 Days:
 - Letter to USDA addressing issues covered in the resolution.
 - Meet with USDA to address consultation request.
 - Prepare update on NCAI advocacy for 2020 Executive Council Winter Session.
- 90 Days:
 - If congressional advocacy has been identified, begin implementation (*e.g.*, letters and meetings).
- 120 Days:
 - Continue implementing identified advocacy and track this issue for future developments.