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FSA County Committee (COC) Tribal Outreach

July 11, 2018

**Farm Service Agency
County Committees**

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Before We Begin

- Audio is streaming through your computer.
- Questions should be submitted via text in the Chat box Feature.
- This session is being recorded and will be posted to www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach after it's been captioned.



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Welcome

Cynthia Cuellar: FSA, National Outreach Specialist

Jean Knight: FSA, COC Program Manager

Ruth 'Pinky' Beymer: COC Member in Oregon



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Agenda

- Why are having this webinar?
- History of COC and Responsibilities
- Importance of COC
- What are some common barriers?
- How are LAA's decided?
- Who can **serve** on COC?
- Who can **vote** for COC members?
- FSA Outreach for COC
- Sharing Experiences (Current COC Member)
- Dates to be Aware Of



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Why are we having this webinar?

- To acknowledge and address barriers.
- Provide better understanding of terminology.
- Open the door for further dialogue.



History of the County Committees

- Authorized by Congress in 1930s
- Critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA
- More than 7,700 committee members serve on more than 2,200 committees nationwide





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Responsibilities of the County Committees

- Critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. Select individuals to serve in the County Executive Director (CED) position.
- Administering farm program activities conducted by the County FSA Office.
- Monitoring changes in farm programs. Participate in county meetings. Have a voice at the table.
- Informing farmers of the purpose and provisions of the FSA programs. Bring awareness back to communities.



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Roles on the County Committees

Elected Members	Advisory Members
Elected by Community	Appointed by State Committee or USDA Secretary to represent underserved producers.
Voting Member	Non-Voting Member
3-11 Members per COC	1 Member per COC
3-year term	1-year term
Fills out form FSA 669-A	Submits a letter of request for consideration to be appointed.

*An Alternate COC Member may replace a member for a single meeting, and only becomes a member if the alternate permanently replaces the member.



Importance of COC

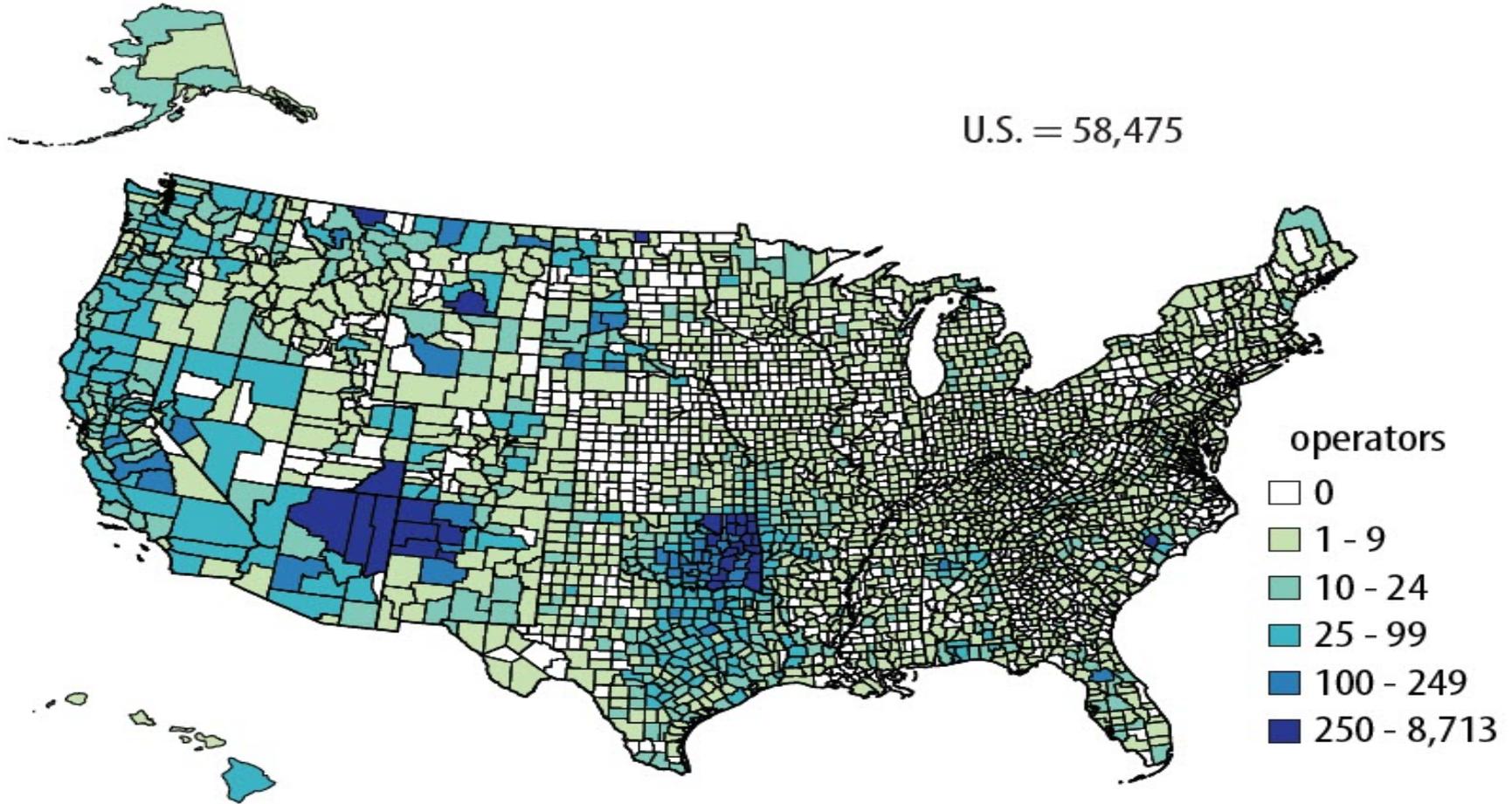
- Members should represent the diversity within their communities.
- Ensures FSA program availability is known to farmers and ranchers.
- Helps spread knowledge of eligibility and variety of programs.

Table 1
American Indian Farm Operators, 2007 and 2012

	2007	2012	% change
American Indian farm operators	55,889	58,475	+5%
Total farm operators	3.3 million	3.2 million	-3%
American Indians as % of total	1.7%	1.8%	
American Indian principal operators	34,706	37,851	+9%
Total principal operators	2.2 million	2.1 million	-4%*
American Indians as % of total	1.6%	1.8%	

Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

American Indian Farm Operators, by County, 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.



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Demographics of COC

Voting Members by Percent	Gender		Race/Ethnicity							SDA (Race)	Ethnicity	
	Female	Male	African American or Black	American Indian or Native Alaskan	Hispanic or Latino	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	SDA (White)	Total SDA	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
2014	16.5%	83.5%	2.2%	2.3%	1.8%	0.3%	--	93.6%	--	6.5%	--	--
2015	17.3%	82.7%	2.1%	2.2%	1.9%	0.3%	--	93.5%	--	6.6%	--	--
2016	17.8%	82.2%	2.2%	2.3%	2.0%	0.3%	--	93.4%	--	6.7%	--	--
2017	18.16%	81.84%	2.15%	2.49%	1.68%	0.22%	0.08%	93.05%	0.33%	6.95%	1.68%	98.32%



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Common Barriers

What we have heard:

The paperwork is overwhelming when signing up for loans/programs.

How we are responding:

One of FSA's more popular loans is the microloan program.



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Common Barriers

What we have heard:

Access to broadband in order to receive information.

How we are responding:

To reach eligible voters for COC, ballots are sent via mail.



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Common Barriers

What we have heard:

Understanding which programs are available in your local area.

How we are responding:

COC Members should be sharing information in their respective areas.



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Common Barriers

What we have heard:

Traveling the distance to be involved in COC meetings.

How we are responding:

Some meeting can be conducted via teleconference. This is a non-salary public service position, however, a small stipend and travel is provided to offset expenses.



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Common Barriers

What we have heard:

You have to be a subject matter expert in order to serve on a County Committee.

How we are responding:

You just need to have an interest in farming/ranching operations.



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How are LAA's decided?

- ❖ Counties with Native American reservation land shall consider tribal reservation boundaries in establishing LAA's. LAA's do not have to follow State or county lines.
- ❖ Each county reviews and draws up their own Local Administrative Areas (LAAs) every year.
- ❖ County Committees provide State Committees with proposed changes to LAA boundaries each year no later than April 1st.
- ❖ All changes to LAA shall be in effect no later than June 15th of each year.



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Who serves on a County Committee?

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Must also meet following requirements:

- ✓ Be a producer with an interest in farming or ranching operations
- ✓ Participate or cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law
- ✓ Be a U.S. Citizen
- ✓ Be of legal voting age
- ✓ Meet the basic eligibility requirements
- ✓ Reside in the county or multi-county jurisdiction in which they will be serving.



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Example Question

The tribe owns land in Monroe County, and they would like to have a tribal representative serve as a COC Advisor on the Monroe County Committee.

The representative they want to serve, does Not live in Monroe County, and the representative isn't an active participant in FSA Programs, but they are a participant of the operation by nature of being a tribal representative and being involved in management decisions of the Tribe's farming operation.

Can the tribe have this representative serve on the COC in Monroe county?

Answer: Yes, they are able to serve as a COC Advisor because the representative is acting on behalf of the "entity".



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Defining the Requirements

- ❑ What does it mean to “be a producer with an interest in farming or ranching operation”?
- ❑ What does participate vs cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law mean?
- ❑ What does it mean to “meet the basic eligibility requirements”?



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How to Nominate

- ❖ Fill out form FSA-669A
 - ✓ Obtain one from the FSA Service Center
 - ✓ Online: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/county-committee-elections/>

- ❖ Must be signed and dated by Nominee

- ❖ Delivered to the FSA County Office or postmarked no later than August 1, 2018

- ❖ Signed and dated as a write-in candidate if elected as a member and willing to serve on the COC.



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Voting for COC Members

Who can vote for the COC members?

- ❖ Ag producers of legal voting age participating in FSA programs, or younger person supervising/conducting entire farm operation.
 - ✓ What does this mean?

- ✓ Individual Voters
 - Eligible to vote on one's own right
 - Partner in a general partnership
 - Member of a joint venture.

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Voting for COC Members Continued...

- ✓ Authorized Nonindividual Voters
 - Corporation, estate, trust, limited partnership or other business enterprise
 - State, political subdivision of state or state agency.
- ✓ Spouses in community property states.
- ✓ American Indian tribal members
 - If Ag land is tribally owned or held in trust for tribe by U.S.

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Voting for COC Members Continued...

- ✓ Every member of an Indian tribe is considered a landowner if the land in question is tribally owned or held in trust for the tribe by the United States.

- ✓ **All members of Indian tribes holding agricultural land are eligible to vote** if they meet the age requirement. To be on record as an eligible voter, members of Indian tribes must be entered in SCIMS as an individual and:
 - Flagged eligible to vote
 - entered in the correct COC/LAA on the COC Election website.

Note: Tribal entities shall not be considered as corporations unless the entity is operating as a bona fide corporation chartered by the State.



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How to Vote

✓ Mail

- Eligible voters are mailed a ballot on November 5, 2018.
- Mail in your ballot before the last day to return ballots (December 3, 2018).

✓ Walk into your County office.

✓ The Counting Process of the Ballots is Public.

- **Note:** Correction to this slide has been made. There was an error in the live recorded session on July 11, 2018. Correction is: Ballots cannot be printed off the internet. Only Nomination forms can be printed from the internet.



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FSA Outreach

- ✓ Each FSA county office will work with the State office to prepare an outreach plan.
- ✓ Stakeholder Engagement - FSA county and State offices, with guidance from the FSA national office, will prepare a list of group contacts with which FSA will work on its outreach efforts.
- ✓ Resource Toolkits (<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/county-committee-elections/>)
- ✓ Webinars and Meetings



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Dates to be Aware of:

- ❖ **June 15th** – The nomination period began.
- ❖ **August 1st** – The nomination period closes. This is the last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA Service Center.
- ❖ **November 5th** – Ballots mailed to eligible voters.
- ❖ **December 3rd** – Last day to return voted ballots to the FSA Service Center.
- ❖ **January 1, 2019** – The newly elected COC Members take office.



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Sharing Experiences Ruth “Pinky” Beymer

- ❖ Pinky is the third generation to live on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in central Oregon, which covers 560,000 acres of desert, mountains and water.
- ❖ Pinky serves on the Jefferson County FSA Committee as a voice for Native American producers. She has served two consecutive terms and is currently the vice-chair.

“I’m trying to promote and support all phases of Indian agriculture,” said Beymer. “We’ve been in a drought and fire situation, so we are trying to make people aware of those programs if they’ve had losses.”

Learn more about Pinky at:

<https://usdaonline.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f34470f6eb9645ddbc2332886d3b4338>



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Questions? And for more information...

Find Your Local FSA Service Center at:
<http://offices.usda.gov>

Find more outreach material for COC at:
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/county-committee-elections/>

Find out more about Farmer Elected Committees at:
www.fsacountycommittees.org



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Other Resources

2016 USDA Resource Guide for American Indians and Alaska Natives:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-usda-tribal-guide.pdf>

2018 Tribal Youth Resource Guide

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018-usda-tribal-youth-resource-guide.pdf>



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Thank you for joining!

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Questions/Answers

Question: Are there any tribal organizations that look out for other tribes?

Answer: Many tribal organizations work to support and help numerous tribal nations. Specifically, in regards to USDA and FSA, there are several stakeholders and organizations that work on behalf of tribes. Two examples include:

- American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC): <http://www.aihec.org/>
- Intertribal Agriculture Council: <http://www.indianaglink.com/>



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Questions/Answers

Question: What if the tribe is federally recognized, but does not own land?

Answer: If you are farming or ranching (leasing or utilizing land) and do not own it then you are eligible as a farmer/rancher.

Note: Often there are organizations established within the tribe. Organizations get to vote if eligible and therefore get to have a representative run on the COC.

Further, as an individual tribal citizen applying for the loan, the eligibility for a underserved loan is based on self-determination and does not tie to being an enrolled tribal member or descendent.



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Questions/Answers

Question: What about tribes who have a statute at large written from the lord proprietors of Great Britain but not "state" recognized. Being a historical tribe of a particular state, what programs are available? From the statutes the tribe is State recognized?

Answer: Many USDA programs are available for all citizens including tribal citizens, tribal organizations and tribal governments. This includes participation on COC. There is a useful guide that can be found at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2016-usda-tribal-guide.pdf>. For programs that require you to be a federally recognized tribe you need to meet the definition. Historically, most of today's federally recognized tribes received federal recognition status through treaties, acts of Congress, presidential executive orders or other federal administrative actions, or federal court decisions. In 1978, the Interior Department issued regulations governing the Federal Acknowledgment Process (FAP) to handle requests for federal recognition from Indian groups whose character and history varied widely in a uniform manner. These regulations – 25 C.F.R. Part 83 – were revised in 1994 and are still in effect. Also in 1994, Congress enacted Public Law 103-454, the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (108 Stat. 4791, 4792), which formally established three ways in which an Indian group may become federally recognized:

- By Act of Congress,
- By the administrative procedures under 25 C.F.R. Part 83, or
- By decision of a United States court.



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Questions/Answers

Question: Does acting on behalf of the entity only apply to tribal members, or can it be applied to other socially disadvantaged (SDA) organizations/groups?

Answer: It does not only apply to tribal members. A member representing an entity may be listed as a candidate for COC.

A person, including a person designated to represent an entity, who meets the Eligible Voter requirements is eligible to vote.

A legal entity is one such as:

- Corporation, estate, revocable and irrevocable trust, limited partnership, limited liability company, or other business enterprise, excluding general partnerships and joint ventures.
- State, political subdivision of a State, or any State agency.