

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Food Package Review Work Group – Goals, Structure, and Review Process

BACKGROUND

In 1997, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) convened a committee by resolution request from the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (NAFDPIR) Board to conduct a comprehensive review of the FDPIR food package. Based on the recommendations of that committee, FNS implemented many improvements. In 2000, at the NAFDPIR annual meeting, a resolution was passed by the NAFDPIR membership requesting activation of the FDPIR Food Package Review Work Group for the purpose of reviewing the food package on an ongoing basis for quality, customer appeal, cultural appropriateness, nutritional integrity, and recommending appropriate food package improvements. The term “consultation” used in this document is considered formal consultation between the NAFDPIR Board and USDA staff and is not formal consultation among tribal leaders.

PURPOSE

In 2002, at the request of NAFDPIR, the FDPIR Food Package Review Work Group was formed. The Work Group brings together stakeholders that provide the necessary perspective and expertise on Native American health and nutrition issues, participant food preferences, and the Federal procurement and delivery process for USDA Foods. These experts include Federal and Tribal health professionals, NAFDPIR officials, and other representatives from the Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and State agencies that administer FDPIR. NAFDPIR was instrumental in nominating the Tribal health professionals and FDPIR representatives on the Work Group.

The Work Group meets on an ongoing basis (about every two months currently) to periodically review the FDPIR food package. Its goal is to consider revisions to the food package to better meet the nutritional needs and food preferences of program participants without significantly increasing overall food costs. All food package revisions must be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The types of changes considered by the Work Group include:

- Adding new products,
- Increasing the choices in a particular food category,
- Improving product packaging,
- Changing the pack size of products,
- Eliminating a product,
- Revising the guide rate for a product, and
- Improving the quality and nutrient profile of USDA Foods provided by FDPIR.

The Work Group prioritizes a list of proposed changes to the food package, rather than review the entire food package at each meeting/teleconference. However, every prospective change is considered in terms of its impact on the people being served, the nutrient profile and the cost of the entire food package.

MEMBERSHIP

The FDPIR Food Package Review Work Group consists of 18 voting members and 6 non-voting Resource Representatives. Some of the membership will change every two years. The change in membership coincides with the election of the NAFDPIR Board. This rotation of members allows a continual flow of new ideas and perspective into the Work Group. Each Region will choose ITO Representatives and ITO Regional Nutritionists and Health Expert members assigned to the Work Group. Membership positions not designated for biennial rotation will change on an as needed basis.

Voting Members –18

Eight FDPIR Program Staff (selected by NAFDPIR)

- NAFDPIR Board including
- 4 NAFDPIR Regional Vice Presidents

Four ITO Representatives (selected by NAFDPIR Regional Vice Presidents and may serve as alternates or proxies for NAFDPIR Regional Vice Presidents)

Four ITO Nutrition and Health Experts (selected by respective Regions)

Two Federal Nutritionists

- 1 Representative from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- 1 Representative from the Food and Nutrition Service

Non-voting Resources -6

Three USDA Food Ordering Specialists

- 1 Representative from Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- 1 Representative from Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
- 1 FNS headquarters food ordering team leader

Three FNS FDPIR Program Staff

- 1 FNS Food Distribution Division Branch Chief
- 2 FNS Regional Office/Field Office staff

REVIEW PROCEDURES

FDPIR participants and Program Directors are encouraged to bring ideas, concerns, and questions about the food package to your Regional NAFDPIR Vice President or Representative. Your input is a very important part of this process. Work Group members are responsible for communicating your feedback to the larger Work Group and also for advising Program Directors in their Region of Work Group progress.

Most of the review work is accomplished via conference calls. These calls are arranged as needed. A face-to-face meeting may be arranged in conjunction with the annual NAFDPIR conference held each year in either April or June. The review process is as follows:

- ❖ FNS provides the Work Group with background information on FDPIR and the review process.
- ❖ The Work Group begins discussions on proposed changes. The proposals for change may be obtained from several sources, including:
 - Reports of product acceptability
 - Written or verbal suggestions/complaints submitted to FNS by participants,
 - Input from individual FDPIR Program Directors,
 - Resolutions passed by NAFDPIR,
 - Input from FNS headquarters, regional and field office staff,
 - Input from Department of Defense staff (procurement agents for the FDPIR Fresh Produce Program), and
 - Input from other interested parties (e.g., others from within IHS, CDC, etc.).
- ❖ The nutritionists and health experts provide input on proposed changes from a nutritional standpoint. If a product meets basic nutritional requirements, the product passes to procurement and resource staff in FNS, AMS, and FSA.
- ❖ If the nutritionists and health experts cannot arrive at an agreement about whether a food meets nutritional requirements, the issue will be elevated for formal consultation. The consultation process will be:
 1. FDPIR food package consultation with the NAFDPIR Board and USDA officials*

*This process may be further defined in upcoming discussions with the Office of Tribal Relations and NAFDPIR.
- ❖ FNS, AMS, FSA staff begin gathering preliminary information to determine the feasibility of proposed changes in terms of cost, package sizes, and availability. This information will include a cost and nutritional analyses to determine the impact of the recommended changes on the cost and nutritional profile of the food package as a whole.
- ❖ The Work Group finalizes discussions on the proposed changes and submits its recommendations. For those proposals requiring formal consultation, if the product change is approved to move forward, the Work Group will advise AMS or FSA to begin work.

Based on its review of the cost and nutrition analyses, the Work Group produces a final list of recommended changes to be considered for adoption by USDA. FNS support staff advise USDA officials of the recommendation and a final decision is made based on cost and nutrition analyses. If a recommended change does not increase the cost of the total food package and meets nutritional requirements as determined by the FNS nutritionist in consultation with food package Work Group, nutrition and health members, the final decision is made by the Director, FNS Food Distribution Division (FDD).

Regional Tribal Nutritionists and Health Experts

Mountain Plains: Jana Milner, RD, LRD
Midwest & Northeast: Theresa Gordon, Nutrition Educator
Southwest & Southeast: Carmen Robertson, Nutritionist
Western: Desiree Jackson, RD

Federal Nutritionists:

Vacant DHHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Stephanie Cooks, MA, RD Nutritionist, USDA FNS, Nutrition Services and Access Branch

NON-VOTING TRIBAL AND FEDERAL RESOURCE REPRESENTATIVES

Department of Defense

Patricia Scott DLA Civilian Troop Support

USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service:

Sara Hernandez USDA, AMS, USDA Foods Procurement Staff

USDA, Food and Nutrition Service:

Julie Skolmowski, MPH, RD, SNS Chief, FDD, Nutrition Services and Access Branch
Matthew Martin FDD, Household Operations Branch
Melissa Baker FNS Western Region
Jessica Creed Capsel Nutritionist, FNS Mountain Plains Region

*Alternates: Samia Hamdan, FNS Midwest/Northeast Regions and Lou Hankins, FNS Southwest/Southeast Regions

NOTE: The Mid-Atlantic Region is not represented because it contains no tribes participating in FDPIR.