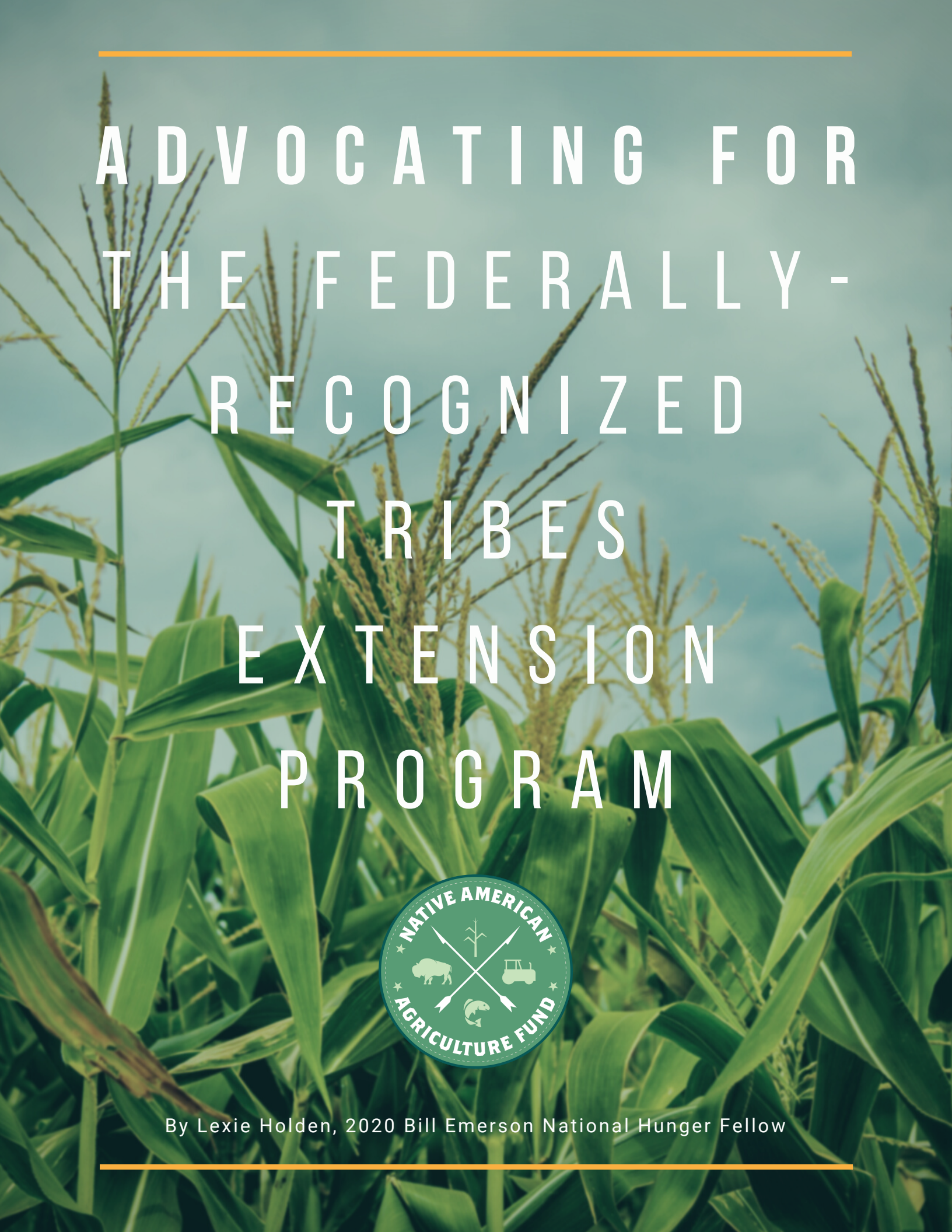

ADVOCATING FOR THE FEDERALLY-RECOGNIZED TRIBES EXTENSION PROGRAM

By Lexie Holden, 2020 Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow

ABOUT US

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) is a private, charitable trust serving Native farmers and ranchers through strategic grantmaking in the areas of business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and advocacy services. The charitable trust was created by the settlement of the landmark *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* class-action lawsuit. NAAF is the largest philanthropic organization devoted solely to serving the Native American farming and ranching community. For more information visit www.nativeamericanagriculturefund.org

From the desk of:
Cris Stainbrook
President, Indian Land Tenure Foundation

As President of the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF), I am pleased to introduce this report on the current status of the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP).

The underpinning of the Foundation's work related to agricultural initiatives and programs in Indian Country is the increased recovery, control, and management of Indian lands. Much reservation agricultural land has been alienated from Indian ownership.Therefore it stands to reason that the more ILTF supports Native Ag producers and their continued engagement in agriculture, the more land they will seek to re-acquire. The FRTEP program is a natural conduit to achieve these initiatives in Indian Country through its diverse array of programs for Tribal communities and hands-on activities for Native youth that prepare and motivate the next generation of Native producers. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) stand to benefit from the capacity building, education and training that FRTEP provides.

The ILTF relies upon trusted partners and routinely takes on dependable new ones. We welcome the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) as a partner that has demonstrated clear mission alignment with ILTF's long-term support of, and involvement with FRTEP. ILTF supports two major initiatives in FRTEP. First is Ripple Effects Mapping—a story gathering process that draws out the rich experiences of, and benefits accrued to tribal community members as a result of engaging with individual FRTEPs. The second initiative is to provide supplementary funding to FRTEPs that help address issues in Indian Country from the perspective of land. The community value of land ownership skyrockets when there is culturally aligned production on it. Should that land become capable of feeding the people in perpetuity, it becomes priceless.

I fully support the Tribal Colleges & Universities movement. I observe the TCUs making incredible progress every year in program expansion, facilities, and community research. Additionally, the FRTEP model, offered through the 1862 land grant institutions, provides Tribal entities with an excellent avenue to build capacity at the community level while accessing faculty research through established facilities of colleges and schools of agriculture at state universities. As such, FRTEP can serve as a vital partner in the TCU movement. Both the FRTEPs (housed at the 1862 institutions) and 1994 land grant institutions bring their unique expertise and perspectives to the knowledge roundtable…again, with clear mission alignment.

I am proud of the relationship that our organization has cultivated between ILTF, FRTEP, and NAAF. Further, I am honored to be asked to introduce this report.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REMAINS A GOOD IDEA

Joseph G. Hiller, Joe Graham, Toni Stanger-McLaughlin, and Lexie Holden

A good idea is a good idea. This report *Advocating for the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program* was made possible with support from the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF). It assesses the current status of the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) through the eyes of Extension faculty and staff that engage Tribal communities and Tribal citizens where they live: on farms, ranches, gathering zones, communities, hunting territories, and accustomed fishing locations. This report contains salient information to aid Tribal leaders in their decision making and long-range planning. Further, this report provides advocates with the critical information they will need to advance FRTEP, Tribal food sovereignty efforts, and the full spectrum of agriculture practices throughout Indian Country. A close examination of the environment in which this program exists is long overdue. Not only is the research timely and relevant but also crucial to understanding extension education services on Indian Reservations.

Since the earliest encounters between the Indigenous peoples of this hemisphere and colonizers from the European nations, agricultural and subsistence knowledge was important as a *de facto* currency. Knowledge of plant edibles, wild game and domesticated animals transferred back and forth between established communities of Indigenous peoples and the European immigrants new to this land. By that time, a profound knowledge of foods, resources and ecological systems had already been developed. When successive European governments made war upon or entered treaties with Tribal Nations in order to stake claims to land, livestock and the knowledge of husbandry was often a bargaining chip. Colonizing governments recognized that agricultural exchange was a good idea.

Early treaties with Tribes normally included agreements for the provision of agricultural education. As the United States maneuvered to acquire Tribal land, the process of treaties and executive orders resulted in establishment of Indian Reservations, today recognized as homelands for many Indigenous Nations. Often Reservations contained the least desirable land. Lands deemed as excess within the exterior boundaries of many Reservations were often converted to fee patent and allowed to pass out of a legal status that normally would have prevented it. This resulted in reserved lands becoming owned by non-Indians. Further, the inheritance of land allotted to Indians became troublesome to the point of madness: lands passed only to family successors as undivided tracts so within a mere few generations many parcels had hundreds of equal-share owners. Land management by Tribal owners for the purpose of agriculture quickly became almost impossible. Legislation passed in 1862 [1] granted states land (frequently recently appropriated Tribal land) to create educational institutions that focused on teaching agriculture, home economics and the “mechanical arts” (engineering). Subsequent legislation created

agriculture research (Hatch Act) [2] and agricultural extension (now Cooperative Extension) [3] as two additional agriculture missions of the 1862 land grant universities. Americans recognized that agriculture education was a good idea.

In the article "Is 10% Good Enough? Cooperative Extension Work in Indian Country" (Hiller, 2005) [4] I described early attempts at agriculture extension on Indian Reservations and the evolution of extension work that left Indian Country behind. But briefly, by the late 19th century a few Indian Reservations had localized agricultural training through the "boss farmer" model. The boss farmer was hired by a Reservation's Indian agent so any activity in agriculture education was likely in the form of work as a hired laborer. Attempts made to conform the model to the USDA-Extension format would not succeed. Chief among the obstacles were government-to-government relations. In the Smith-Lever Act that funded the formulas for Cooperative Extension work there was no legal justification to subordinate Tribes to counties or states—an assumed requirement to receive the county-state-federal partnership monies to support Cooperative Extension. By the early 20th century a few Indian Reservations that had developed cordial relationships with adjacent counties could access county extension services. Some Tribes arranged for Extension work through BIA contracts on their behalf with the local 1862 land grant university. Youth organizations like Future Farmers of America (FFA) could be found on many Reservations but attempts at having the USDA formally implement extension services on all Indian Reservations were not successful. During the same period, most Tribal boarding schools operated farms and required male students to provide the labor but vocational training was focused on trades such as carpentry and mechanics. In 1988 leaders of two fledgling Indian agriculture advocacy groups made a concerted effort to reinstate federal support for agriculture extension programs on Tribal Reservations. The Extension on Indian Reservation Program (EIRP) that was authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill [5] and funded to support some dozen agents out into Indian Country and it was this program that would later become FRTEP. Tribal agriculture leaders recognized that agriculture extension education was a good idea.

There are various actors that can potentially exercise a "sphere of influence" in agriculture extension on Tribal lands. First, county extension agents (and by association their 1862 land grant institutions) have the existing statutory directive to operate in the lands within each county's boundary. These statutory directives have not specifically excluded Tribal lands yet the arrangement has failed to produce Cooperative Extension programs in Indian Country other than FRTEP's 3% (a figure more accurate than the inflated, often cited 10%). Counties adjacent to Tribal Reservations normally contain plenty of non-Tribal lands and communities that require the attention of a county agent/educator. Yet it is not uncommon for county agents to provide services to non-Native agriculture operators that are literally across the road from Tribal agriculture projects. To work on a Reservation, county agents need to seek out the permission of a Tribal Government but more importantly, will need to have the relationships in place that lead to an invitation to assist. Second, some Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) have extension programs but the majority of them do not. Those TCUs that do have extension programs struggle with support—not only financial—from Tribal government, critical mass of faculty, student

numbers, and an agriculture mission. In addition, an overwhelming majority of Tribal Reservations are not serviced by a TCU. Therefore, although there is solid potential for relational connections, most Tribes are not serviced by a TCU with agricultural outreach programs or research facilities. The TCUs that do offer extension services are building a solid foundation but the gap in resources between the TCUs and the 1862s remains wide. Third, there are a very few Tribes that provide extension services directly to their own people on their own Reservations or those who have "bought" their own extension agent from the 1862s for specific use relevant to the Tribe. Obviously the potential for relational connectivity and cultural competency are profound but the number of Tribal Nations that maintain an extension service in agriculture for their people is very small. Fourth, there is FRTEP. FRTEP agents are faculty and staff employees of the state universities, allowing them to access the resources and facilities of the 1862 land grant institutions. These agents operate directly on Tribal Reservations and many of them are Tribal citizens themselves. FRTEP agents have been on site in about 30 locations for nearly three decades.

Tribes need more. Tribes need access to their agricultural university teaching, research and extension missions *through Cooperative Extension field offices*—equitable to the over 3,100 non-Indian counties across the U.S. Tribes need an updated approach to provide solid extension services in Indian Country. The need is not new so the push to build out sustainable extension systems that truly serve Tribes must be revisited. Tribal producers, communities and Nations are significant players in agriculture. American Indians farm and ranch on over 57 million acres of land in 30 states and the idea that we can survive on 10% (actually over three times the precise figure) or less should be confronted and dispatched once and for all.

The systemic avoidance of providing programs for Indian Country continues to this day. While funding for 1862 land grant agricultural missions including Cooperative Extension is supposedly based on formulas grounded in numbers of farms and farmers, Indian farmers were not counted until only recently. Even now, those formulas have been subjected to innumerable modifications as to not be representative of the original intent. With Indian ag census data slowly becoming available, it appears the formulas in the enabling legislation may not be able to parse funding for Tribes. Most importantly, Indian Country needs a modern, well-funded and ubiquitous Extension System—just like we see in America's counties. The Native American Agriculture Fund has coined a term for a system that supports reawakening Indigenous agriculture. They call it a 21st Century Native Agriculture Extension System. Please continue reading because what follows is a seminal report. It amplifies the value of the FRTEP program. I also know a good idea when I see one.

[1] Land-Grant College Act of 1862 (Morill Act), Pub.L. 37-130. 7 U.S.C. ch. 13 § 301 et seq.
[2] Hatch Act of 1887, Pub. L. 49-314. 7 U.S.C. ch. 14 § 361a et seq.
[3] Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Pub.L. 63-95. 7 U.S.C. ch. 13 § 341.
[4] Hiller, Joseph G. "Is 10% Good Enough? Cooperative Extension Work in Indian Country." Journal of Extension, Vol. 43; No. 6. December 2005.
[5] Food, Agriculture, Conservation, & Trade Act of 1990 (1990 Farm Bill). Pub. L. 101-624, Title XVI-Research, Section 1677.

MESSAGE FROM THE RESEARCHER

Halito,

If you are reading this, it is because you have been identified as an important ally for agricultural producers across Indian Country. It is my hope that you will use the information contained within this report to advocate on behalf of farmers and ranchers in Indian Country, and that you will do so with pride.

This report exists because of the partnership between two amazing organizations: The Congressional Hunger Center (Hunger Center) and the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF). As a member of the Hunger Center's 27th class of Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows, I was assigned to NAAF for the field placement portion of my yearlong fellowship. This report, *Advocating for the Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program*, is the culmination of my work while at NAAF.

This report includes everything about the Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) that an ally would need to know to advocate on behalf of the program. It does this through both data and the telling of FRTEP agents' stories as they work to support Tribal Nations' agricultural aspirations.

In another report I wrote while at NAAF, I examined nationally led agricultural extension programs in 22 countries with large Indigenous populations. Advocates of extension across the globe agree that the United States has the best nationally led extension system in the world. However, despite our system being the best, it has also discriminated against, neglected, and failed to provide parity for many demographics of farmers and ranchers within the U.S., particularly Native people and Tribes.

The Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) was created through the 1990 Farm Bill with the aim of addressing the inequities of the Cooperative Extension System by creating a separate extension system which serves only Indian Reservations and Tribal Nations. The FRTEP has never been funded at the levels appropriated in the 1990 Farm Bill. Despite this, the program has had a profoundly positive impact on agriculture across Indian Country.

Through an examination of the program's history, its goals, and surveys and interviews of the agents who dedicate themselves to it, it is my hope that you will see why this program is so essential and deserves your support. The Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program is not a perfect program, but it is necessary and it, like the people it serves, deserves parity.

Yakoke!

Lexie Holden
Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow, 27th Class
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

American Indian	a member of a group of people Indigenous to North, Central, or South America
American Indian and Alaska Native	used by the U.S. Census Bureau; refers to a member belonging to a Tribal Nation in the U.S., including Tribal Nations and Villages in Alaska; abbreviated as "AI/AN"
Cooperative Extension System	a nationwide, educational network administered by the Land-Grant Universities which disseminates agricultural research and provides extension and learning opportunities to farmers, ranchers, and youth; abbreviated as "CES"
Extension	a system in which agricultural research and advice on health and business best practices is disseminated to rural communities; is available to producers, youth, and the community at-large
Federally Recognized Tribe	an American Indian or Alaska Native group of peoples recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. and possess certain rights of self-government, such as tribal sovereignty; there are currently 574 federally Recognized Tribes
Fee Simple or Fee Land	land over which the owner has full and irrevocable ownership; the owner also has ownership over any improvements to the land like buildings or farmland; often the type of land ownership of which most people think
Food Insecurity	the economic and social condition where one has limited access to food
FRTEP	the Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program; an extension program which serves only American Indian Reservations and Tribal Nations
FRTEP Agent	the person hired to establish and administer the FRTEP on a Reservation and/or within a Tribal Nation
Hunger	a physiological phenomenon, such as physical discomfort, felt by someone experiencing food insecurity
Indian	the incorrect, demonym originally used to describe the inhabitants of the Americas; some American Indians refer to themselves as "Indians" as an act of reappropriation; when speaking to or about someone who is American Indian, ask them how they wish to be referred, as some find this term offensive
Indian country	defined in 18 U.S.C. § 1151 and 40 C.F.R. § 171.3 as "all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government...all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States...and all Indian allotments"

CONTINUED

Indian Country	defined by the National Congress of American Indians as "a general [positive] description of Native spaces and places within the United States, and it is inclusive of the hundreds of tribal nations that occupy these spaces"; inclusive of both the people and the land
Indigenous	refers to the original inhabitants of an area
Land Dispossession	the removal from the land or the deprivation of ownership over the land by one group against another; in the United States, this began in 1492
Land-Grant University	a U.S. institution of higher education which benefits from the Morrill Acts; the resources for these institutions came from the cession and dispossession of Native lands which were either sold for cash or used for the land itself; Texas A&M is one example among the 112 Land-Grant universities
Native American	a member of a group of Indigenous peoples belonging to the Americas, including Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Canadian First Nations, and Central and South American Tribes; sometimes shortened to "Native"
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	a federal agency within the USDA which administers federal funding to address agricultural issues, including the FRTEP; abbreviated as "NIFA"
Reservation	an area of land managed by a Native American Tribe under the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the U.S. has over 300 Indian Reservations totaling over 56 million acres
Tribal Nation	a group of American Indians or Alaska Natives located within the U.S. geographically, but which exercises sovereignty over its own people and maintains a nation-to-nation relationship with the U.S.; also known as Tribe, Nation, Band, Community, Pueblo, Rancheria, or Village
Tribal Trust Lands	non-fee lands on American Indian reservations; the title is held in trust by the federal government, for the benefit of the American Indian people
Trust Responsibility	according to the Department of the Interior, it is the "moral obligation that the U.S. must meet to ensure the protection of Tribal and individual Indian lands, assets, resources, and treaty and similarly recognized rights"; promised to Tribes in treaties
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture; tasked with leading on issues related to food, agriculture, rural development, natural resources, and nutrition

TIMELINE OF NATIVE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION

TIMELINE OF NATIVE AMERICAN

Agriculture existed in the Americas long before European contact.

Two myths dominate discussions of pre-contact agriculture in the Americas. The first suggests that the Indigenous population did not shape the lands by way of agriculture, and instead lived in harmony with the "virgin" nature. The second acknowledges that Indigenous populations did shape the land through agriculture but suggests that these were unstable practices which yielded only marginal results. Thanks to modern-day Indigenous scholars working in anthropology, history, and agriculture, we know these myths to be false. Instead, we know that Native Americans lived on some of the most fertile lands on the continent. We know that they successfully farmed a diverse array of productive crops. We also know that the methods Native American farmers and ranchers used were among the most sustainable practices in the world at that time.

This timeline has been optimized for digital viewing and should be read from left to right, top to bottom, with the second half of the timeline continuing onto the next page.

1492

Christopher Columbus sails for Asia and lands in the Dominican Republic.

1493

The Papal Bull “Inter Caetera,” issued by Pope Alexander VI, establishing the Doctrine of Discovery.

1500-1600

At the end of the 15th century, 60 million people lived across the Americas. Disease, war, and genocide reduced this number to just 5-6 million within 100 years.

1793

Trade and Intercourse Act; contained an appropriation to promote Native American assimilation through animal husbandry.

1823

Johnson v. McIntosh; established that only the U.S. federal government could settle Native American land claims.
(Marshall Trilogy)

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1830

Indian Removal Act; forcibly removed the Five Tribes (Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole) from their lands.

1831

Cherokee Nation v. Georgia; reduced Tribes to 'domestic dependent nations.'
(Marshall Trilogy)

1832

Worcester v. Georgia; established the federal trust responsibility.
(Marshall Trilogy)

1862

Morrill Act of 1862; established the 1862 Land Grant Universities to educate the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

1887

Dawes Act; divided Tribal lands among individuals. Native Americans were expected to assimilate by taking up settler American agricultural practices.

AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION

Continued from bottom of previous page.

1914

Smith-Lever Act; established a national extension system through the 1862 Land Grant Universities.

1975

Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act; recognized the right of Indian tribes to self-government.

1990

1990 Farm Bill; established the Extension Indian Reservation Program (EIRP). Renamed the Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) in 2005.

1994

Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act; endows some Tribal colleges and universities with Land-Grant status.

1997

USDA issues Civil Rights Action Team Report; offers advice for overcoming past injustices against women and farmers of color.

2009

Cobell v. Salazar settled; legally binding negotiations and Indian policy still matter; U.S. government has a responsibility to manage Indian lands in the best interest of Native Americans.

2010

Keepseagle v. Vilsack; USDA discriminated against Native farmers and ranchers. Settled for $760 million.

2018

Native American Agriculture Fund formed; largest philanthropic organization serving solely Native farmers and ranchers.

2018 Farm Bill passed; included 63 Tribal provisions, the most ever.

2023

2018 Farm Bill expires; a perfect opportunity to support Native American farmers and ranchers through the continued dedication to and protection of the FRTEP.

As this timeline indicates, considerations for Tribes have consistently lagged behind considerations for other groups in the U.S., particularly when it comes to providing an equitable system of agricultural extension.

Prior to European contact, Native Americans and their agriculture thrived. Despite centuries of genocide, violent removals, land grabs, broken treaties, boarding schools, forced assimilation, and systemic discrimination, Native American farmers and ranchers remain resilient, sowing the seeds which will feed generations to come.

HUNGER IN INDIAN COUNTRY

HUNGER IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Hunger versus Food Insecurity

While often used interchangeably, hunger and food insecurity are not synonymous. **Hunger** is a physiological phenomenon, such as physical discomfort, felt by someone experiencing food insecurity [1]. **Food insecurity** is the economic and social condition where one has limited access to food. Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as "a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life" [2]. There are four categories of food security: high, marginal, low, and very low. While the "high" and "marginal" categories may experience a brief episode of food insecurity during an event like a natural disaster, the "low" and "very low" categories experience food insecurity regularly. The below graphic is adapted from the source at [3].

USDA Economic Research Service Categories of Food Security

High Food Security	Households had no problems, or anxiety about, access to food.
Marginal Food Security	Households had problems, or anxiety, at time about accessing adequate food, but the quality, variety, & quantity, were not substantially reduced.
Low Food Security	Households reduced the quality, variety, & desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake & normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.
Very Low Food Security	At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted & food intake reduced because the household lacked money or other resources for food.

12.5%

2017 Rate of Food Insecurity Among Non-Natives [4]

25%

2017 Rate of Food Insecurity Among American Indians/Alaska Natives [5]

The rate of food insecurity among Native Americans is *double* that of non-Natives.

What Causes Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity is not simply explained by a lack of funds for food. There are many confounding variables, called root causes, which contribute to a lack of access to sufficient, healthy food. When income is too low and the cost of living too high, individuals can be forced to choose between food and other necessities, like healthcare or housing. Sometimes, food is physically inaccessible as individuals live far away from grocery stores and lack sufficient affordable transportation to get there. Instability in jobs, such as unpredictable hours or seasonal employment, or limited access to education, can also depress income and wages. Below are just some of the many root causes of food insecurity in the U.S.

ROOT CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

Low Wages & Poverty

Lack of Affordable Housing

High Medical Costs

Disability

Incarceration

Lack of Transportation

Lack of Educational Opportunities

Job Instability

Discrimination

Food insecurity has many root causes. They are deeply interconnected, and each must be removed in order to end hunger.

Root Causes of Food Insecurity Specific to Native Americans

While all of the previously mentioned root causes of food insecurity are applicable across most demographics faced with hunger, some specifically affect Natives. This is because they stem from **settler colonialism**. Settler colonialism occurs when one group enters an area to which they do not belong and attempts to replace the Indigenous population through genocide or assimilation.

Land dispossession, in the case of Native Americans, is the practice of removing individuals or Tribes from their ancestral lands. Since 1776, nearly 1.5 billion acres of land have been dispossessed from Tribes by the U.S. government or its citizens [6]. Natives were valued for the land they lived on, The U.S. government dispossessed Natives of their land through land grabs and empty promises in treaties.

Land dispossession contributes to present-day food insecurity among Native Americans in a variety of ways. As Tribes were removed from their lands, they were also removed from their traditional food systems. Tribes were not always guaranteed to be removed to similar ecosystems, abruptly shifting diets and means of food production. The repercussions of these removals had such an effect on Tribal food security, that in the 1960s and 1970s, sometimes more than a century after removal, Tribes were forced to rely on **commodity boxes** from the U.S. government. These boxes must be provided to Tribes as part of the trust responsibility of the federal government. These boxes introduced foreign, often unhealthy, foods into Natives' diets, contributing to medical conditions like obesity and diabetes. Many of these conditions have persisted over generations, though the boxes now include healthier options like lean meats and fresh produce and are a welcomed way to address food insecurity in Tribal communities. As of 2017, over 90,000 individuals received commodity boxes through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) [7].

In the present day, both remaining in and starting out in the agricultural industry requires significant capital. It is expensive to purchase and maintain farm equipment, livestock, feed, and seeds. Whereas many producers can use the land they own as collateral when applying for loans, this process can be more challenging for those living on reservations. Sometimes reservation land is held **"in trust"** by the federal government, and banks are often reluctant to underwrite loans when trust land is involved, because trust land cannot easily be used as collateral [8]. Land held in trust can be a barrier to the creation of new, Native-owned farms and ranches, and a barrier to feeding Native communities.

Additionally, many Tribal lands are located in **remote, rural** areas. Grocery stores are few and far between, roads are often unpaved and bumpy, and public transportation is nearly nonexistent. These factors make the use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a social safety net program which is excellent at lifting users out of poverty; SNAP can only be administered at registered retailers, which may not exist within Tribal communities or are difficult to access. All of these issues compound on each other, making it difficult for both producers and consumers to get to markets, contributing to both lower rates of employment and lower rates of food security.

How Investing in Native Agriculture Can Help

When a community has control over its own food system, that community can flourish. Food is absolutely essential to life, and when food security is low, it is difficult to engage in activities beyond those which ensure basic survival. By making investments in agriculture across Indian Country, Tribal communities are better able to control their own food systems. This has numerous benefits.

Natural disasters are less likely to cause low or extremely low food security in Tribal communities which command their food systems. This is because the supply chain which brings food from the farms to the Tribal members' tables is considerably shorter. Food is not transported across the country to major grocery stores far from Tribal lands. Instead, it comes from your own backyard or that of a neighbor, reducing the overall disruption to food security in the event of a natural disaster.

When Tribes are able to choose what they want to produce, there is often a desire to return to traditional foods. While what is considered "traditional" varies widely across Tribes, traditional foods all often have something in common: they are healthier and contribute to an overall healthier lifestyle than many foods brought to this country by colonizers. Foods like wheat flour and butter are not part of any traditional Native diet, though their presence in commodity boxes distributed to Tribes by the U.S. government has inflicted upon Natives the highest rates of obesity and diabetes among any demographic. However, traditional foods are not the only products reducing food insecurity in Tribal communities; ranching, commercial agriculture, and row cropping all play essential roles and deserve support.

Traditional foods are often those which naturally occurred in a particular ecosystem. They require less industrial interference in their production, allowing for a return to more sustainable methods of growing. Sustainable methods are more likely to be used when consumers live where the food is grown.

Agriculture is an industry that is incredibly diverse in the number of job opportunities it can offer. It includes more than just farmers and ranchers; it requires fishers, teachers, engineers, scientists, community organizers, entrepreneurs, and artisans. Agriculture is also a career path that can be explored at a young age, helping communities shape and retain future producers.

Finally, as food is so inextricably linked to culture, investing in agriculture in Indian Country is investing in the future of Native American cultures across the country. For centuries Native Americans were forced to suppress or forget their cultures in order to assimilate. It is past time to support cultural preservation, something which investments in agriculture are well-positioned to do. One way to invest in agriculture is by supporting agricultural extension programs, like the FRTEP, as they help communities begin and continue to engage in agriculture.

FRTEP VERSUS THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

FRTEP VS. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

What is the Cooperative Extension Service?

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) under the USDA, disseminates research and provides agricultural extension to farmers and ranchers across the United States. The CES is operated through the Land-Grant University System in partnership with federal, state, and local governments.

The CES has offices in or near almost all of the United States' 3,000 counties. The CES has maintained an average of 15,000 employees available to serve roughly 3.4 million farmers across the country. This averages to 226 farmers and ranchers per CES agent [1] The typical budget for the CES is around $300 million annually.

Why Might Native Farmers and Ranchers Not Use the CES?

Given that the CES covers more of the U.S. than the FRTEP, has more employees than the FRTEP, and is better funded than the FRTEP, one might ask why more Native American farmers and ranchers do not use the CES. By no means does this report seek to suggest that no Native farmers or ranchers use the CES or consult with its agents. That would be a gross misrepresentation of the truth. However, Native agriculturalists have, and often still do, faced barriers to using the CES which either do not exist, or exist to a lesser extent, with the FRTEP. It is these barriers which helped to spur on the creation of the FRTEP.

The U.S. government promised agricultural extension-like services to Tribes in numerous treaties, treaties which do not have an expiry date. These promises were often made to encourage the assimilation of Tribes. Now, extension services are provided to the Tribes by the federal government as part of the U.S. government's federal Indian trust responsibilities, making the provision of extension both a moral and legal obligation. To fail to provide equal access to extension to Native Americans is a civil rights violation.

Though there are CES agents in over 3,000 counties, many of these agents are located far from Indian Reservations and had, and continue to have, little incentive to travel of hundreds of miles to provide extension to Tribes. Some do not view the Natives living within their county, but on a reservation, as "real" customers, eligible for county funds or resources [2]. Whether due to disinterest or discrimination, the original assimilation-based provision of extension services for the Tribes faded away over the decades until the mid-1900s when extension for Tribes essentially ceased to exist.

The FRTEP was created because the CES failed to adequately serve Native American farmers and ranchers.

The Land-Grant University (LGU) System, through which the CES operates, was created through the expropriation of Tribal lands. The 1862 Morrill Act, which created the LGU System, redistributed almost 11 million acres from over 250 Tribes to these fledgling universities [3]. While some universities kept the land and built their institutions upon it, others sold the land for cash.

One part of the CES model for extension is the dissemination of research to farmers and ranchers. However, this research may not take into consideration Indigenous time-tested methods of agriculture management. Native farmers and ranchers have used their own placed-based methods for over two millennia and their survival is proof of the methods' efficacy. Nevertheless, some agents may not realize that these methods have over 10,000 years of replication and that scientific validation is implicit. This may seem counterintuitive to the methods taught through the LGU system, but it must be understood. Agents who do not understand traditional methods of Indigenous agriculture run the risk introducing techniques that may actually be harmful to the environment.

Additionally, discrimination against Native American farmers and ranchers by U.S. government-backed programs is undeniable. Within the USDA, Native farmers and ranchers were consistently denied access to credit which similarly situated white farmers received. This discrimination was proved in the lawsuit *Keepseagle v. Vilsack*, settled in 2010 [4]. Discrimination extended beyond the USDA's farm credit assistance programs, and affected other programs, including extension.

The assimilationist nature of extension offered to Tribes, the dispossession of Tribal lands to create the LGU System, and the lack of knowledge about or respect for traditional Indigenous methods of agriculture have, understandably, tainted the relationship between CES agents and Tribes. While many Native producers still use the CES, because they are satisfied with the services it provides or because they do not have access to the FRTEP, some Native producers feel that they can only rely on the FRTEP.

The FRTEP Fulfills a Promise & Counteracts Past Mistakes

Agricultural extension was promised to Tribes in numerous treaties. These treaties do not include a date at which point such services can be terminated by the U.S. government. Extension is promised to any American through the CES. Yet, we can see how the CES has failed, and sometimes may still fail, to provide adequate extension services for Native farmers and ranchers. The FRTEP fills the gap in service left open by the CES and makes good on the promises made by the U.S. government throughout centuries' worth of treaties. In these ways, the FRTEP does so much more than just provide agricultural extension. However, as it will be illustrated over the next several sections, the levels of funding and staffing which the FRTEP receives, do not match the significant responsibilities of the program.

The CES was built upon a foundation of land dispossession and often, disregard for the traditional methods used by Native agriculturalists. It is understandable that some Native producers still view the program with hostility.

USDA'S FRTEP PRIORITIES

USDA'S FRTEP PRIORITIES

Many Priorities for Very Few Agents

According to the USDA, "FRTEP programs are developed through local needs and objectives, reaching an underserved audience often overlooked by broader Extension efforts. FRTEP is often the key to leveraging additional development resources to reach those communities and individuals in most need" [1].

Unfortunately, the current lack of sufficient additional extension staff in FRTEP offices means that one FRTEP agent may be responsible for providing every priority listed below. Unlike the Cooperative Extension System offices, which have many experts who are each specialists in a particular area of extension, FRTEP agents must undertake work in all of these areas to fulfill each of the FRTEP's priorities.

Tribal Youth & 4-H

According to the 2010 Census, 42% of American Indians/Alaska Natives are under the age of 24 [2]. Youth development and 4-H programs help us raise the next generation of Native agricultural producers. In addition to ag-focused activities, some FRTEP agents work to support Tribal youth more generally by offering mental health programming. This is particularly salient when considering the disproportionately high rates of suicide and depression among Native youth [3].

Native Farmer & Rancher Productivity and Management

Native-run farms are, on average, twice the size of farms run by non-Natives. In 2017, the average Native-run farm was 978 acres compared to 441 acres overall [4]. The average annual value of sales for Native-run farms is roughly $58,885 [5] compared to $43,053 overall [6].

Native Community & Economic Development

American Indians/Alaska Natives face high rates of poverty. Roughly 25% of AI/ANs face poverty [7], compared to 15% of non-Natives. Investments in agriculture could produce a Native value-added agriculture worth $45.4 billion, surpassing the entire $33 billion Indian gaming industry [8].

Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security & Obesity Reduction

American Indians/Alaska Natives face rates of food insecurity higher than any other demographic. Roughly 25% of AI/ANs are food insecure compared to 12.5% of non-Natives [9]. In addition, 33% of AI/ANs are obese, due to a lack of access to healthy foods [10].

Natural Resource Conservation

Native Americans, with close ties to the land, manage more than 95 million acres [11]. In addition to being dispossessed, Tribal lands are popular targets for unwanted land uses such as dump sites, weapons testing facilities, and harmful resource extraction. These activities can diminish the health of its current occupants and render the land unusable for future generations.

Adaptation to Climate Change

Climate change already affects our environment. Certain regions of the U.S. are disproportionately impacted by climate change. In Alaska, where 40% of federally recognized Tribes are located, Tribes are already facing rising temperatures, melting sea ice, and thawing permafrost [12]. Around the U.S., climate change has impacted wild harvesting and gathering, traditions which have gone on for thousands of years. These interruptions also affect Tribal economies [13]. Adapting to climate change requires funds, innovation, Tribal input, and action.

Native American Cultural & Linguistic Preservation

During the assimilation era, Natives in boarding schools were prohibited from speaking their native languages and often received harsh punishments for doing so. As a result, there has been a steep decline in the number of native languages speakers. Only 372,000 Natives still speak their native language at home [14].

The FRTEP goes beyond providing agricultural extension. It addresses language preservation, climate change adaptation, natural resources conservation, food insecurity, economic development, and youth engagement.

FRTEP FUNDING AND STAFFING

FRTEP FUNDING

Historically Underfunded

When the FRTEP, formerly known as the Extension Indian Reservation Program (EIRP) was initially created in the 1990 Farm Bill, it was authorized for $6.2 million annually [1]. It was appropriated only $1 million. Due to inflation, $6.2 million in 1990 is worth over $12.6 million in 2020. The amount promised to Indian Country for agricultural extension has never been fully appropriated. To date, the highest level of annual funding the FRTEP has been appropriated is $3 million [2].

Disproportionately Underfunded

Compared to non-Native farmers and ranchers, AI/AN agriculturalists receive disproportionately less extension support. For FY 2018, the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) received $288,538,091 to fund over 15,000 CES agents [3]. The FRTEP received $2,912,490 in FY 2018 to fund 36 FRTEP agents [4]. While AI/ANs make up only 1.7% of the U.S. population [5], there is a lack of parity which our small population does not account for. Our agents must serve 9.7x as many producers as CES agents do.

If we consider that FRTEP agents do not only serve Native producers, but entire Tribal communities, we could also calculate how many AI/AN people, generally, FRTEP agents serve. In 2017, there were 36 FRTEP agents and roughly 5.6 million AI/AN individuals in the U.S. That amounts to 155,555 people per FRTEP agent. The overall U.S. population was 325.1 million in 2017. Divided among the roughly 15,000 CES agents at that time, each CES agent served 21,673 people. That represents a sevenfold increase in the number of people whom FRTEP agents serve compared to CES agents. FRTEP agents are consistently asked to do more with less.

3.4 MILLION
2017 # of Producers in U.S. [6]

÷

15,000+
2017 # of CES agents [7]

=

226 PRODUCERS/ CES AGENT

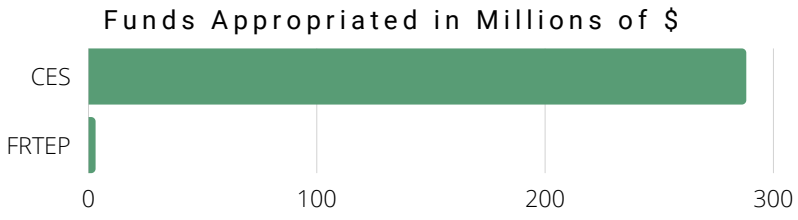
79,198
2017 # of AI/AN Producers [8]

÷

36
2017 # of FRTEP agents [9]

=

2199 PRODUCERS/ FRTEP AGENT



Unstable Funding

FRTEP agents cannot anticipate or budget their funding levels from year to year because the FRTEP is now funded through a series of competitive grants which agents must reapply for every four to five years. This was previously not the case, and could be changed at any time by the USDA's NIFA, the entity responsible for administering the FRTEP funds. NIFA is not currently required to consult with Tribes when making determinations about which FRTEP positions will lose funding [10]. This is to the detriment of Tribes, agents, and producers, as long-standing programs with established records of success are not guaranteed to be re-funded and can lose funding seemingly without cause or warning. One such example is the South Dakota FRTEP. Despite South Dakota's rank as the twelfth largest state by population for AI/AN producers [11], the state lost all three of its agents during the 2017 grant cycle.

Unstable and unpredictable funding limits FRTEP agents' ability to plan and provide programming for the communities they serve. With possibly only four or five years to design and implement projects, agents' choices are limited. Agriculture is not a fast-paced industry and nurturing young producers through 4-H programs must take place over a child's lifetime. A four-to- five-year grant cycle is not conducive to such aims. Many agent-led projects depend upon community trust, something which is easily lost and hard to regain. It can take as many as ten years for a community to learn to trust an agent, though agents are not guaranteed ten years' worth of funding under the current competitive grant cycle system. Additionally, job instability has been shown to negatively impact employees' mental health and overall well-being [12].

Inadequacies Acknowledged

Cooperative Extension Service (CES) agents do not compete for funding. Instead, the CES is funded through a combination of federal, state, and local dollars. State and local governments are required to match federal funds, dollar-for-dollar. Federal funding is determined through a formula set out in the Smith-Lever Act where "20% is first divided equally among the States; 40% to states based on their proportion of rural population; and 40% to the states based on their proportion of farm population" [13].

Funding for FRTEP agents does not have the same stringent requirements for state and local funding. While some state and local governments choose to help fund their FRTEP agents, much of the monetary burden falls on the federal government, which has never appropriated FRTEP the funding it first authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill. Additionally, the 1862 Land-Grant universities which have FRTEP agents are not required to provide the agents or their programs with any funding or resources.

This lack of parity in funding is not unknown to the USDA. While not responsible for funding the FRTEP, the USDA recognized that the current funding levels are insufficient for achieving the program's aims.

According to USDA documents, the agency acknowledges that FRTEP funding levels are "*not sufficient*" and that the competitive grant cycle perpetuates "*instability and inconsistency in marginalized, impoverished and underrepresented communities*" [14].

WHERE FRTEP AGENTS WORK

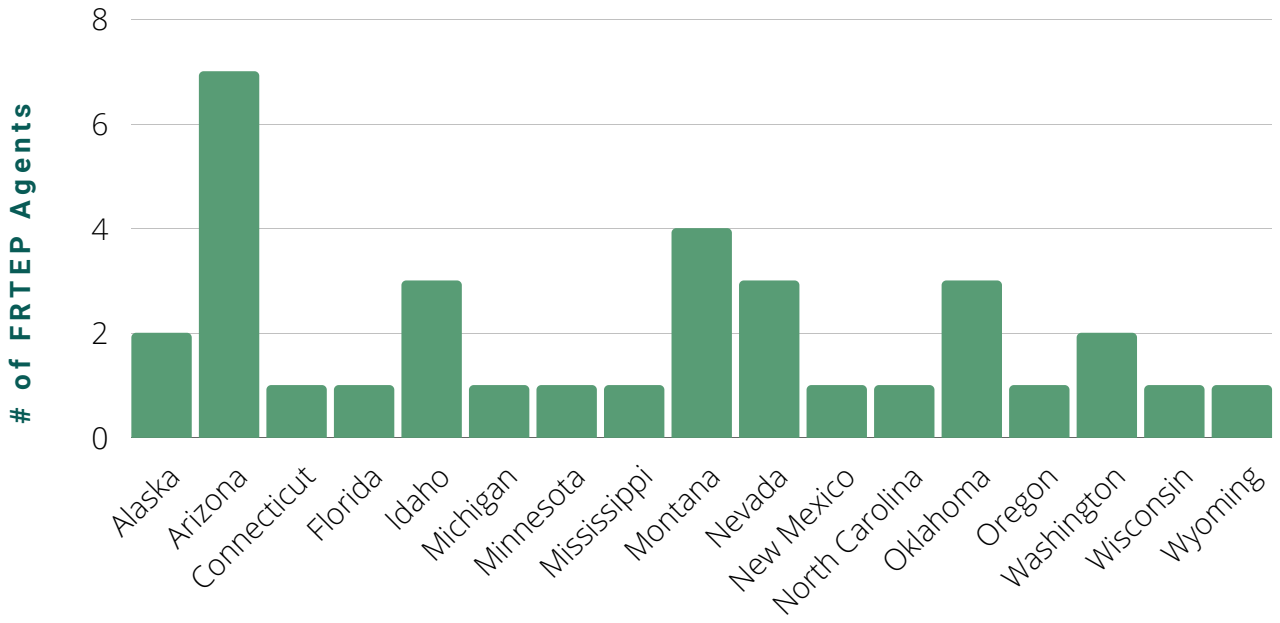
Few and Far Between

In 2020, a total of 34 FRTEP agents served Tribes across 17 states. While some agents serve multiple Tribes or Bands, there are not enough agents to serve all 574 federally recognized Tribes [15]. Additionally, some top states for AI/AN-led agricultural production, do not have a single FRTEP agent.

As seen on the opposite page, the number of FRTEP agents distributed to the 17 states do not currently align with the United States' AI/AN population distribution, or the distribution of AI/AN agricultural producers. Two of the ten states with the largest AI/AN populations and seven of the top ten states for AI/AN producers do not have a single FRTEP agent.

With 574 federally recognized Tribes and roughly 326 reservations, FRTEP agents are expected to serve an average of 16 Tribes or 9 reservations each.

DISTRIBUTION OF FRTEP AGENTS



Top States for AI/AN Producers (2017) [16]

1. Arizona (19,481)*
2. Oklahoma (17,102)*
3. New Mexico (8,812)*
4. Texas (5,663)
5. California (2,537)
6. Montana (2,130)*
7. Missouri (1,544)
8. Utah (1,467)
9. Arkansas (1,326)
10. Alabama (1,326)

Top States by AI/AN Population (2019) [17]

1. Alaska (15.4%)*
2. New Mexico (10.9%)*
3. Oklahoma (9.3%)*
4. South Dakota (9%)
5. Montana (6.6%)*
6. North Dakota (5.5%)
7. Arizona (5.3%)*
8. Wyoming (2.7%)*
9. Washington (1.9%)*
10. Oregon (1.8%)*

States denoted with an (*) have at least one FRTEP agent.

SURVEY DATA COLLECTION

A SURVEY OF FRTEP AGENTS

Survey Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to assess the strengths, assets, and resiliency of the Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) agents working with Native farmers and ranchers. The responses will be used by the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) to create a report which highlights the successes and challenges of the FRTEP.

At the start of 2021, NAAF distributed a survey to all 34 FRTEP agents with the above purpose. All of the questions asked are listed below, along with the possible answer choices. The responses are included where respondent anonymity is not at risk. A brief statement as to why each question was asked is also included as are some general conclusions about the responses. Survey respondents were given the opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview. Those interview questions are listed separately at the end, as they appeared on the actual survey. Of the 34 agents reached out to, 20 agents responded.

What is your name?

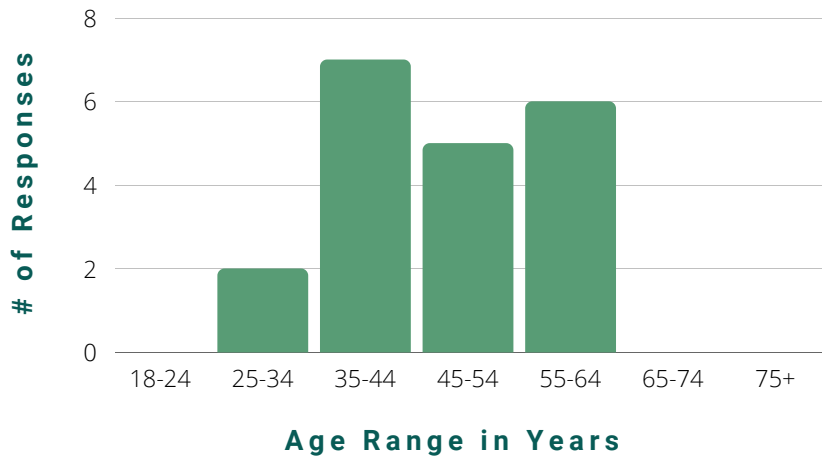
For the sake of anonymity, responses for this question are not shared. This question was asked to ensure that only current FRTEP agents responded to the survey.

Which university are you affiliated with?

For the sake of anonymity, responses for this question are not shared, as there may only be one agent at a particular university. This question was asked to help identify candidates for the follow-up interview.

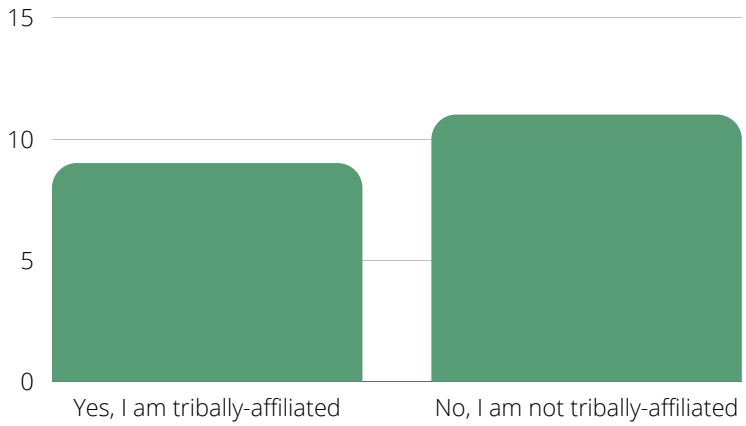
What is your age range?

This question was asked to determine roughly how many current FRTEP agents could be on the verge of retirement and may subsequently require replacement before the end of their grant funding cycle.



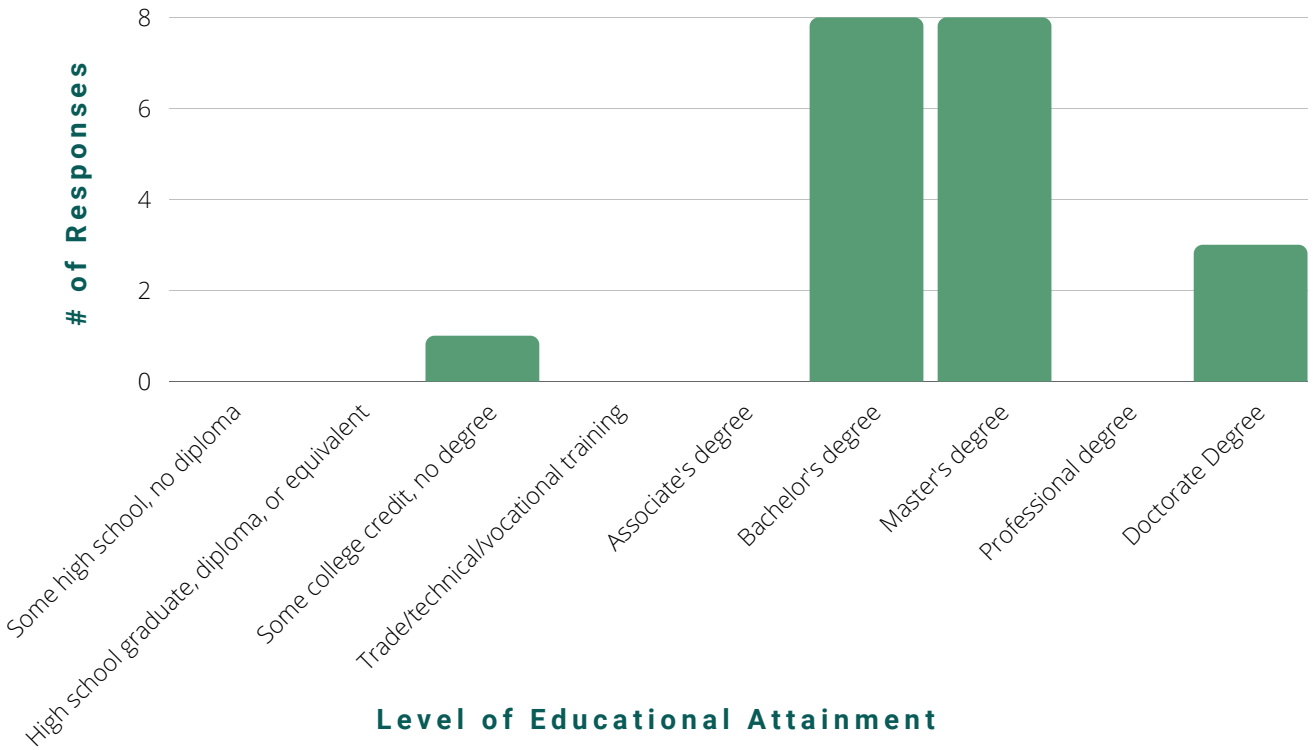
What is your tribal affiliation?

For the sake of anonymity, responses which reference specific Tribal affiliations are aggregated under the umbrella of, "yes I am Tribally-affiliated," as compared to "no, I am not Tribally-affiliated." We chose to use the word "affiliated" rather than "citizen of" or "member of" as it allows for respondents who have faced disenrollment or whose Tribe has lost federal or state recognition, to still claim their Indigeneity.



What is the highest level of education to have completed?

This question was asked to determine the investment in education made by FRTEP agents.

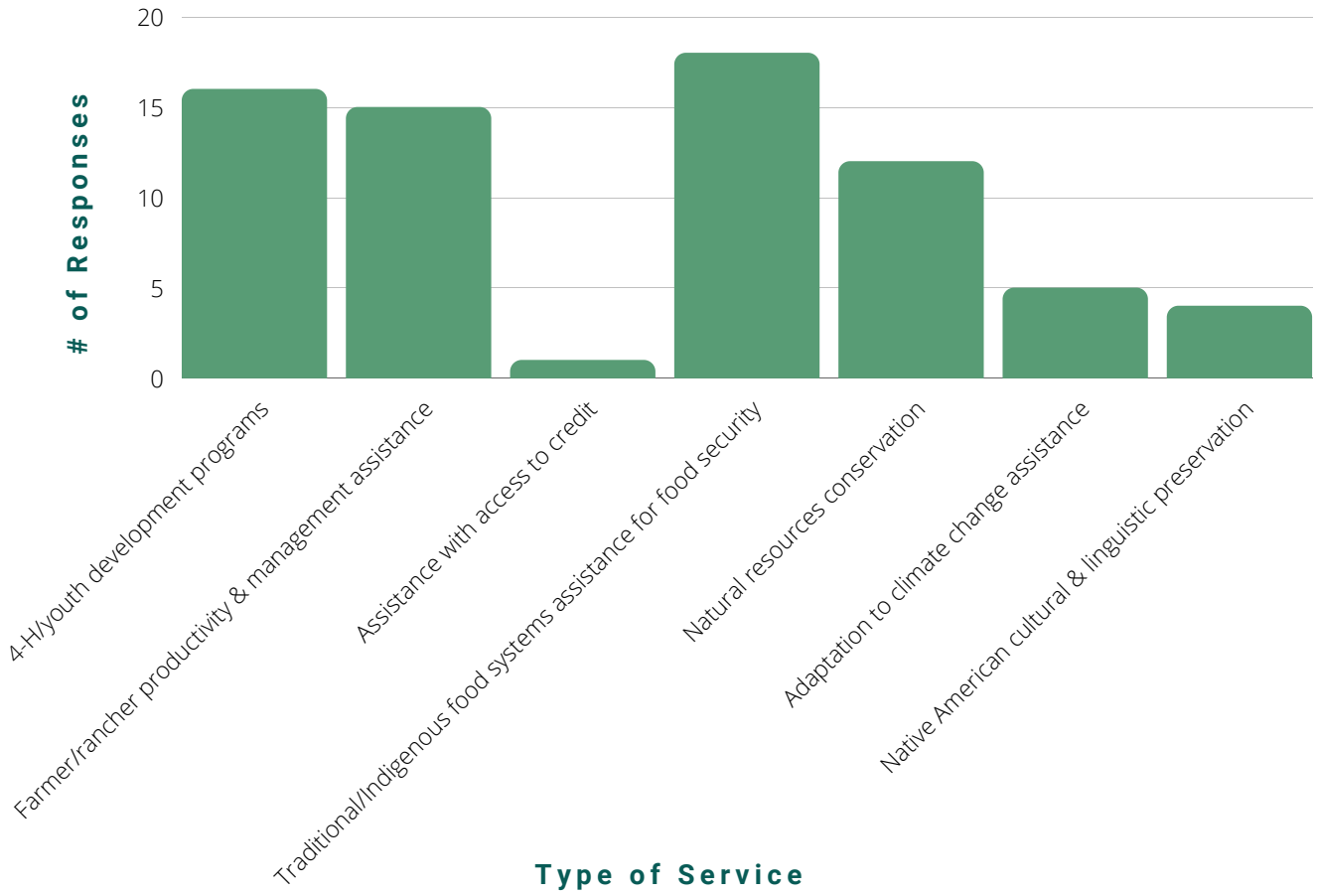


What is your assigned reservation/location?

This question was asked so that it would be easier to identify agents for the follow-up interview, which was targeted to FRTEP agents from Montana and Arizona. As there is only one agent assigned per reservation/location, we will not be including that information for the sake of the agents' confidentiality.

What kinds of services do you typically oversee/provide? Please select all which apply.

This question was asked in order to highlight the many roles which agents must assume during their time working for the FRTEP. Response rates reflect that individual agents selected multiple choices, as directed in the above instructions.



Open-Ended Questions

The responses to following questions come directly from survey responses and were only edited for clarity and grammar. The most common phrases or themes are represented at the end of each section.

What is the FRTEP's greatest strength?

- "They have cultivatable land, internal agricultural experts, & are rich in traditional/cultural knowledge."
- "Agriculture education & youth development."
- "The network of agents across the country that share information & assistance with each other & the direct funding for Tribal Extension that likely wouldn't exist otherwise."
- "Local connectivity with the communities we serve."
- "The network of FRTEP professionals in which you can find guidance & support from."
- "FRTEP agents have local connections, relationship with local leaders, advocate for the Tribes best interest respecting Tribal sovereignty. Local partnership built upon trust & availability. FRTEP can sometimes be the connection to untapped resources within a community. Also, 100% of FRTEP-funded programs are directed to the region & have mutual understanding with Tribes to do work & continually adjust to serve communities need."
- "Building relationships with Tribes where they are & addressing needs."
- "That [Tribes] get Extension on reservations that can provide important assistance & help."
- "Building strength & knowledge within the Tribal communities regarding agriculture, food sovereignty, natural resources conservation, & youth development."
- "The ability to adapt grant programming to the current needs of the Tribe."
- "That they directly support Tribal communities & focus resources there."
- "Program flexibility."
- "People with expertise & networks of support rooted in their communities, communication across networks is encouraged & supported by FRTEP leadership. Available resources & flexibility of spending furthers Tribal food sovereignty."
- "Being dedicated to the community one serves."
- "Its presence in the reservation, the relationships, & trust it has developed with the tribal government & the community. The programs it provides take into consideration the culture & traditions of the tribes."
- "Focuses on the needs of the community being served rather than being driven by outside interests."
- "The extension agents that carry out the mission of FRTEP & more importantly, the Tribes they serve."
- "Providing education, outreach, & information to reservation farmers & ranchers to improve agriculture sustainability."
- "Easy application to address needs of reservations and how to help or aid in the issues addressed."
- "To be able to offer research-based education directly to the Native American communities to address their needs and issues, from conventional to traditional practices that address commercial agriculture to food sovereignty."

Network & Connections

Community

Support & Service

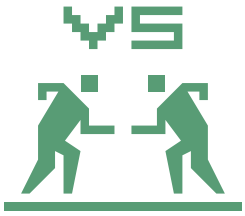
What is the FRTEP's greatest weakness?

- "Receiving up-to-date information relative to changes in federal programs for Native Americans."
- "Somewhat disconnected from the modern agricultural technology."
- "SNAP programs."
- "The competition for funding & the limited availability. If I get my program funded, another tribe is going to be without a Tribal Extension program. The next round will also include 1994 institutions, which has the negative effect of current FRTEPs feeling like the 1994s are now the "competition," negatively affecting potential collaborations or partnerships, rather than feeling like we are in this together (as we are)."
- "Our funding level necessitates that we focus on a more finite collection of activities. Our partners often would like additional educational program but we're financially limited."
- "Uncertainty for the future & lack of flexibility in job growth (merits, COLAs) with funding flat."
- "Lack of advertisement on program & not highlighting programs provided in the community. Limited funding. FRTEP's programs is grant-funded, not allowing room to expand on resources or support program throughout tribal regions. Programs have to rely on other resources such as other grants & at the same time meet goals of objective to keep their job. FRTEP programs are not supported with consistent funding but instead each four years programs have to compete with other tribes to regain and/or fund programs each time RFA is released."
- "The grants are 4 years long and may or may not be renewed; doesn't allow time to build lasting relationships with tribes."
- "There is not enough money to provide a beneficial impact without going out & looking for more grants. We have 1 person doing the work of 3. Our Educator takes care of 4-H, natural resources, farmer &rancher needs, building management, grant management & County Coordinator/Supervisor."
- "[Lack of] stable funding."
- "Lack of staffing."
- "That we are underfunded. The demand far outweighs the need."
- "Limited resources."
- "New competitive grant format. Every tribe should have its own FRTEP educator."
- "Underfunding & single-person offices; people are spread too thin. [Agents are] dependent on the Tribes' offerings, some of which are not up to decent standards (i.e., leaky roofs, mouse-infested storage, crowded office space)."
- "Not enough funds for every Nation to have a FRTEP agent serve them."
- "Need more funding to expand programs within tribal communities, especially in rural areas where the next tribal community may be 100 miles or more away."
- "None."

What is the FRTEP's greatest weakness? (Continued)

- "Its uncertainty. FRTEP is grant-funded & there is the possibility that a certain area will not get funded after four years. The relationship & trust that has been established will get broken & that Tribal community will be left out in the open with programs getting discontinued & leaving them with broken promises. FRTEP also lacks funding support. The budget it gets from the grant was established 30 years ago. Its value has decreased over those years, leaving the agent with limited operational funds."
- "I haven't served as the FRTEP agent for very long, two years. FRTEP needs to hold Land-Grant universities for providing funding for Tribal extension. Right now, Land-Grant universities do not provide financial resources to Tribal extension and I that obligation to Tribes, Tribal extension, & Native youth exists. FRTEP should hold those institutions accountable."

Insufficient & Uncertain Funding



Competing Against Peers for Grant Money

How could the FRTEP be improved to better serve Native American farmers and ranchers?

- "Knowing what the future holds for FRTEP funding to remain in place so that programs aren't started with funding lost shortly after."
- "More professional development training to FRTEP agents."
- "Improved access to communications, funding, & office space."
- "Increase funding so that more projects can be awarded funds. Remove the competitive nature of the process to maximize the benefit to more Tribal communities."
- "1) Increased funding; 2) Continue to share best practices among FRTEP state programs (NIFA works to encourage this but because the grant process is competitive some states may choose not to share their most innovative programs."
- "Increased education on what FRTEP is & who it can and cannot serve should be sent to the University. Also, consistent access to programming funds."
- "First we must understand that FRTEP grants take time to establish what the needs are of the community. Once they are identified it takes time to address the needs. Lastly, many grants end without seeing much progress because there simply wasn't enough time to build the framework to address the needs."

How could the FRTEP be improved to better serve Native American farmers and ranchers? (Continued)

- "Permanent funding for each Region to serve the communities' needs. Programs can improve if Educators don't have to spend so much time looking for resources to expand programs and compete against each other for funding on every grant cycle. Overall, if FRTEP program funds were permanent, FRTEP educators' resources and program development could be more sustainable with less uncertainty regarding whether the programs will exist in the next cycle."
- "For us on the [Redacted for privacy] Reservation it would be beneficial if we could hire some extra help & money for programming."
- "More funding for program development."
- "Funding for additional staffing to promote & implement research-based opportunities."
- "Increase support for additional on-the-ground staff & to access to networks of resource specialists (ag, climate, animal scientists, etc.). I have to spend a lot of time finding people who can support this need."
- "Provide more agents to support community & regional needs."
- "Each tribe has an educator & works with support networks such as tribal partners & Intertribal Ag Council, Extension, etc."
- "Better, more stable funding sources. More people involved instead of one spread too thin person, office space that isn't a tiny corner in another departments space."
- "FRTEP should be funded with a regular and continuous budget for each existing Tribe. This will ensure continuity of programs. Expansion to other federally recognized tribes should be supported by a new budget. Existing budget should be increased to support operations and programs."
- "Increased, adequate & continued (noncompetitive) funds. Let individual Nations define their traditional Food systems. Farmer/rancher may not be how they want to be defined. There is a long history of trying to make natives be something they don't care to be. Let's just talk about it from a generic standpoint of food systems."
- "Start-up funds for new farmers and ranchers, youth farmers & ranchers, & education for small farms."
- "More funding opportunities."
- "More funding in programs that can educate & provide tuition-free classes for the farmers & ranchers."

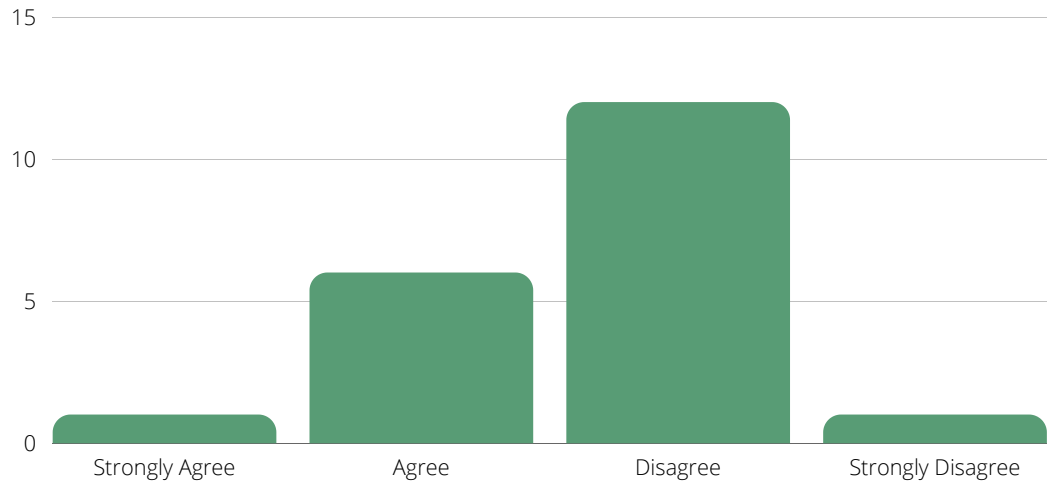
More Funding

More Resources (Office Space, Vehicles, Staff)

More Certainty

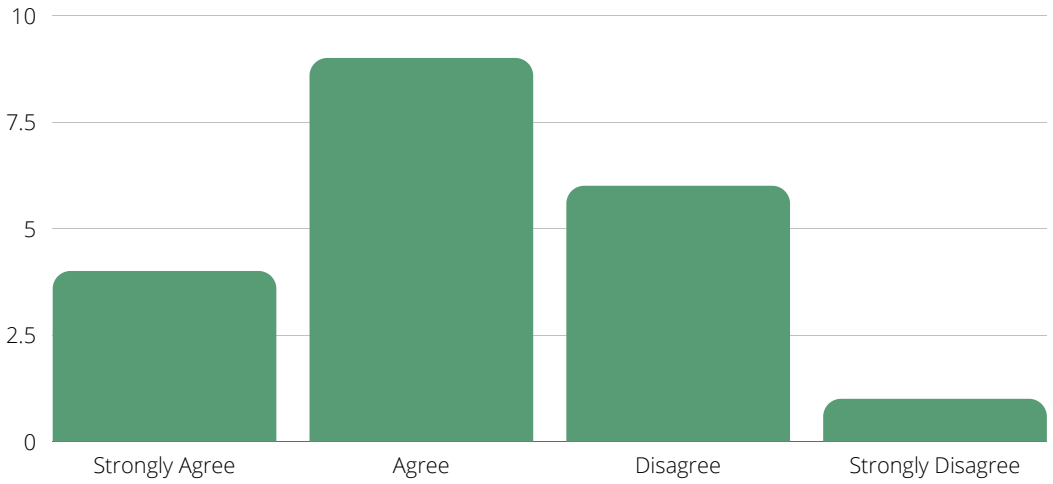
The current competitive, 4-year grant funding for the FRTEP allows me to perform my job at the level I desire.

This question was asked to determine how satisfied agents are with the 4-year, competitive grant cycle which determines FRTEP funding.



The current support I receive from my institution allows me to perform my job at the level I desire.

This question was asked to determine how satisfied agents are with the level of support provided to them by their Land-Grant universities.



INTERVIEW RESPONSES AND FRTEP AGENT SPOTLIGHTS

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Purpose of Follow-Up Interviews

These questions were asked during a post-survey interview with some of the respondents. They were included at the conclusion of the survey so that potential interviewees might have the chance to think about their responses. The post-survey interview was not required and was instead offered to a select group of respondents, namely agents from Montana and Arizona. This was done to limit the number of potential interviews to remain within the project's time constraints. Of the possible eleven FRTEP agents from Montana and Arizona, interviews were conducted with six agents.

The interviews were conducted over the phone and the conversations were not recorded. Instead, notes were taken during the conversation, which were then synthesized for the purposes of this report. Those synthesized comments and quotes were approved by the interviewee. The interviewee was given the option to remain anonymous when their comments were shared, or to be identified by the reservation they serve or their state. All comments or quotes shared are from the FRTEP agents and do not necessarily represent the views of the researcher or the Native American Agriculture Fund.

The interview questions comprised of:
What is your personal philosophy in your approach to this work?
How do you prepare for the FRTEP's competitive grant cycle?
How could your institution better support your work?
What would an ideal version of the FRTEP look like to you?
*What are your proudest accomplishment(s) from this year?**

**This question's responses will be offered in the next section and will not be presented anonymously so as to best showcase the great work of the FRTEP agents.*

What is your personal philosophy in your approach to this work?

"I love my job and I love working with Native Americans. I've lived on the reservation I serve now for twelve years and lived on another reservation for twelve years before that. I love the culture of the Tribe I serve, and love that I get to do meaningful, hands-on activities. While it can be overwhelming doing all of my work alone, I love the FRTEP team and colleagues at my university. I might not have stayed this long with them and their support."
- *An agent from Arizona*

"I truly believe in education and its ability to make yourself and your community better. Not just formal education, but education about running a business or personal growth. That belief really fits well with the outreach and education work we do within the FRTEP."
- *An agent from Montana*

"I was born and raised here and am a member of this community. Growing up, we had a FRTEP agent here, but I had no clue what he did. There was such a disconnect. Now I'm the FRTEP agent, and even though I'm from here, it's taken almost two and a half years to figure out what exactly my role is in the community. I want my program to be known, and I want the community to know what Extension can offer. It's about being an accessible resource and engaging the community in a way that is most useful for them. Whenever I think about what I want to offer, I always ask myself, "Is this what the community needs? Is this what they want?" I have to figure out how to offer a resource in a respectful and engaging way. Of course, none of this work would be possible without the partnerships I've made in the community. One can't do community work alone."
- *An agent from Arizona*

"The people I work with and for, they're the ones who drive me. Our role as FRTEP agents is to strengthen what already exists in the community and to "tap" individuals who haven't been tapped yet. It's all about using the knowledge that already exists in the community to help keep the economy local. If you can help one person use that knowledge or step up to a leadership role, it's worth it because they'll impact the rest of the community."
- *An agent from Montana*

"I believe that people have equal rights. When I look at the Tribal population I serve, I believe that they deserve the same services as everyone else. I also realize and acknowledge that they have a different, unique culture, and I try to take that into consideration as I serve them. Though, there are a lot of similarities with my own culture. It's like I'm serving family members."
- *An agent from Arizona*

"My philosophy is that it is my responsibility, as a FRTEP agent, to facilitate educational opportunities between the university and the Tribal community. I believe that is a privilege learn about the people that I serve and then be able to share their community needs, through a culturally appropriate lens with the university. This then allows me to facilitate educational opportunities that otherwise may not be available in my Tribal community."
- *An agent from Montana*

How do you prepare for the FRTEP's competitive grant cycle?

"Usually, I list down my accomplishments from the past few years and then compare it to the goals I had set in the previous grant application. That lets me see how far we've come. If there are deviations, I try to explain why they happened. Then I identify new opportunities or new needs for the Tribe and try to incorporate that into the application for the next grant cycle. If I can, I match those needs to specific programs which could meet them. My institution offers me a lot of support with the grant process by taking care of the budget side of things so I can focus on the actual programs."
- An agent from Arizona

"I wish that the funding was more guaranteed. Now we are competing against TCUs (Tribal Colleges and Universities), but the overall amount of funding hasn't increased at all. I want to apply for more grant money so I can hire other employees, but I don't know if that's going to happen."
- An agent from Montana

"I'm still not all that confident about applying for the grants, even after three cycles. I try to gather up all of my data, as well as evaluations and letters of support from the Tribe."
- An agent from Arizona

"Previous rounds didn't feel competitive, but that last one did. We lost an agent and I know South Dakota lost everyone. That really threw me for a loop because now I feel like I'm competing with fellow agents, from my own state even. I don't have a background in grant writing, and even though you're writing these grants to save your jobs, sometimes it feels like other institutions write grants without even caring about the outcome. It can take 5-10 years to build up trust in the community, even if you are a member of the community, but you can't explain that in a grant. You can't say that a 4-H program is going to pay off in a decade when the kids grow up and become producers. When NIFA gives out FRTEP grants, they should be selecting grantees based on the work and infrastructure that already exists, rather than awarding what the money could one day create after several successful cycles."
- An agent from Montana

"This will be my first time going through it. I feel really fortunate because we have a lot of agents in my state, so we have a huge network to tap into. I can't offer information for every program, so I look to others who have more expertise for their help. Of course, we could always use more tangible support, like more staff, space, internet connectivity, equipment, funds, storage, vehicles."
- An agent from Arizona

"While I've been in the extension office for thirteen years, I've only been the FRTEP agent for a year and a half. This upcoming cycle is going to my first, and I'm nervous about it. Anxious. Stressed out. I don't feel prepared. Grant writing is not my background. My current plan is to meet with my Tribal Council and community stakeholders to ask how the program is going, what activities they'd like to see continue, and what they'd like to see changed. I would feel a lot better about the upcoming grant cycle if I had more help with the actual grant writing itself."
- *An agent from Montana*

How could your institution better support your work?

"For the most part, my institution does a decent job. My institution used to not understand that the FRTEP and the county extension work totally differently in terms of both operations and delivery. Now, it seems that my institution understands that, though they could still make some changes, like disseminating information geared towards Natives specifically. But the resources that the FRTEP has are totally different from what the county extension has, and I wish that my institution provided more. They have a larger network of support and coworkers, and even their clientele tends to have more resources than ours. It can be isolating."
- *An agent from Montana*

"My institution provides me with a great team, but there are a lot of "lacks." I haven't received a raise in twelve years, though there isn't really any money for it. There is a lack of adequate housing out on the reservation and I've had to sleep in my car before because the drive home is over a hundred miles. There is a lack of adequate office space, and I've had to work out of a dilapidated trailer with no heat, no cooling, and a mouse infestation in my storage. I don't even have a phone at my office. The roads on the reservation are unpaved dirt, but we don't have a work vehicle like county extension does. We have to drive our own vehicle and maintain it ourselves. If I want to lead a field trip or have 4-H kids come out to my office, I have to get someone for the Tribe to come out with a van. I have a great network within the Tribe, but it's another lift to have to ask for help."
- *An agent from Arizona*

"My institution already does a good job supporting FRTEP in terms of helping with getting money for education, books, classes, some travel, help with the 4-H program. It could support us better by actually offering FRTEP agents tenure."
- *An agent from Montana*

"I feel really fortunate because we have a lot of agents in my state, so we have a huge network to tap into. Sometimes you can't offer information or programs about a certain topic yourself, so you look to others who have more expertise for their help. Of course, we could always use more tangible things. More staff, space, internet connectivity, equipment, funds, storage, vehicles…"
- *An agent from Arizona*

"I love my institution; they've been so supportive of just about anything I need or am wanting to do. In my office, we have four or five grants/projects going on at any given time. They all have their own designated grant/project writers. Usually these are the Specialists located in Bozeman. We work together to gather information, but they use their training and experience, to write/submit the grant. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way for the FRTEP grant. This is where I really could use additional support from my University. I would love to work with a grant writer, to assist in gathering the information, but use their expertise to write and submit it."
- *An agent from Montana*

"I am really lucky in the location where I am because the county extension office is really supportive of the FRTEP program. They've allowed me to use office space in their building, and even loan me the county's vehicle if I need it. I know that very few other agents have those kinds of benefits. Really, it's just the financial side of things that I personally need more support on from my institution."
- *An agent from Arizona*

What would an ideal version of the FRTEP look like to you?

"It would be funded with a line-item budget rather than through a competitive grant. That would really give the program some certainty and continuity. It's difficult to develop trust with Tribal members; they've been frustrated and have had promises broken for so long. It's hard to build that back up. When a Tribe, or even sometimes an entire state, loses funding, it betrays that trust. It's difficult to build that back up. Regular county extension offices get funding every year. The FRTEP should be like that. Our budget has been the same since it started in 1990, but inflation has obviously reduced its monetary value over the years. It should be adjusted to compensate for the inflation rate."
- *An agent from Arizona*

"It would absolutely include more program money. I'm the only one in my office. If I got a raise, that would mean less money in my budget overall. That should not be an issue. Everything we need comes out of the grant money, even utilities. If I wanted to hire another person, it comes out of that money. I'd love a real office space. Right now, my office is in a cubicle in a shared workspace. There's no confidentiality. I would want another person working with me who can specialize in cropping or livestock. I wish there wasn't so much turnover. In the last cycle, 1/3 of the agents funded were completely new. It's hard to connect with them since we are scattered across the country."
- *An agent from Montana*

"More people! I am the only person in my office and have to do everything by myself. I'd love to have a program assistant, who can handle the newsletter and radio, and a rangeland expert. We need our own FRTEP vehicles, offices, and storage, too. Also, a higher salary. There are people in county extension who are much younger than I am and have less experience, yet they are being hired with higher salary than mind because their pay has actually increased over the years, unlike ours."
- An agent from Arizona

"As a FRTEP agent, I get pushed around on the reservation because the Tribe doesn't have any space for me. I'd love a home base or office with enough space for outdoor activities. I want it to be accessible to the community, a place to bring people together. We'd need space to store our materials and gear. We'd love to have space to have a fair. Staff! I'd love to have staff. We have one part-time person, but it was so difficult to even get grant money for them. I spend so much time applying for grants, and it really takes away time and energy from serving the community. While I have more time to apply now, with the pandemic making everything remote, that won't always be true."
- *An agent from Montana*

"I could see a staff of twenty, easily. With 2-3 agents for each program area, plus resource specialists in agriculture, cattle/livestock, range management, 4-H, family health, financial literacy, etc. Plus, more interns or AmeriCorps volunteers. With more staff comes the need for more space for offices, too, even now. Currently we are hosted by a private entity. We can only afford to start one new 4-H project a year because of the time it takes to identify and train community volunteers. FRTEP gives us the flexibility to do whatever we want or need program-wise. But we only have enough resources to offer a limited amount. With additional funds to increase staff, space, internet capability, equipment, storage, purchase vans/buses, or vehicles we could do so much more."
- *An agent from Arizona*

"Since being hired as the Agent, I have been working hard to create an ideal version of FRTEP. I want this vision to represent the entirety of what Extension has to offer. To do this, I need to understand what the needs of my community are and how to deliver educational opportunities that meet that need. So often, people think that extension only means agriculture. A more holistic view of Extension would include Agriculture, Positive Youth Development, Family Consumer Sciences and Community Development. In a perfect world, no FTREP would not be a single agent office. We'd have agents dedicated to each area of service. Allowing a uniform and holistic approach to bringing research based, educational opportunities to our Tribal communities."
- *An agent from Montana*

SPOTLIGHT ON ARIZONA

Overview of Arizona

Arizona has more American Indian/Alaska Native agricultural producers than any other state, totaling almost 19,500 in 2017 [1]. In 2017, Arizona had 32,796 producers total [2]. This means AI/ANs accounted for nearly 60% of the state's producers, despite making up just 5.3% of the state's population [3].

Arizona, Oklahoma, and New Mexico together account for 58% of AI/AN agricultural production across the U.S. [4]. Arizona also has seven FRTEP agents (20% of all FRTEP agents), more than any other state.

Currently, Arizona's seven FRTEP agents serve six distinct Tribes. The Navajo Nation is the largest Tribe in the country in terms of population and has three FRTEP agents. The Colorado River Indian Tribes, comprised of the Navajo, Hopi, Mohave, and the Chemehuevi, have one agent. The Hualapai, Hopi, and San Carlos Apache each also have one agent. Arizona has 21 federally recognized Tribes, meaning that nearly one-third of Arizona's tribes are served by a FRTEP agent.

Below is a table detailing the number of AI/AN- owned farms in Arizona, and the market value of the products sold by these farms [5]. The following pages will highlight agents we interviewed and the reservations they serve. It is in these pages that the final interview responses regarding proudest accomplishments will be included.

RESERVATION	# OF FARMS OPERATED BY AI/ANs IN ACRES	MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS SOLD
Colorado River Indian Tribes	34 Farms; 150,683 Acres	$28,660,000
Hualapai	49 Farms; 977, 645 Acres	$673,000
Hopi	204 Farms; 1,685,514 Acres	$1,483,000
San Carlos Apache	751 Farms; 1,824,400 Acres	$751,000
Navajo Nation (3 sites)	16,003 Farms; 15,956,139 Acres	$67,065,000

Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT)

The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Reservation is unique in that it is comprised of four distinct Tribes: the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo. The CRIT reservation is over 300,000 acres in size and has a population of more than 4,000 Tribal members.

In terms of agricultural production, the CRIT reservations' members mostly engage in farming. The reservation has 80,000 acres of arable land and is supported by CRIT's most senior rights to the water of the Colorado River. The majority of the farmland is dedicated to alfalfa, with cotton and durum wheat grown as alternate crops. The higher quality alfalfa is sold to the dairy industry for feed, whereas the lower quality alfalfa feeds the draft animals or is sold to the beef industry. A few members also raise cattle on a small scale.

Agent Alamban's Proudest Accomplishments

Even before becoming a FRTEP Agent, Adonis Alamban had a passion for getting youth involved in agriculture. He previously worked as a Master Gardener program volunteer on the CRIT reservation, a program he continues to support as a FRTEP agent. Even though the CRIT school system has moved online for part of the week due to COVID-19, Agent Alamban is making the most of the hybrid system by getting kids into the gardens on days when they show up for in-person learning. The kids are learning to grow vegetables, citrus, and stone fruit. The fruits are eventually given to the school's Parent, Teacher, Student Organization to sell at fundraisers.

Agent Alamban also supports the 4-H youth program and had one student become a Youth Ambassador at the state 4-H Youth Foundation where they represented Tribal youth during state meetings.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has shut down many in-person operations and events, FRTEP Agent Alamban is not letting the lockdown stop him from serving the CRIT community. Agent Alamban has been offering farmers an online platform to share out about their struggles and successes, all while connecting them to extension specialists from the University of Arizona. While it may not be the FRTEP programming Agent Alamban originally planned for in his grant application, but it is the best that he can do right now.

"What we as FRTEP agents need, is an ally."

- Adonis Alamban, FRTEP Agent at CRIT Reservation

Hopi Tribe

The Hopi Reservation is located in rural northern Arizona's high desert with a Tribal on-reservation population of over 7,000 members. At almost 5,000 feet in elevation, the Hopi Reservation can easily see the effects of drought in the arid desert. Thankfully, Hopi farmers are used to growing with little water using the traditional method of dry farming. This dry faming method is what makes the Hopi Reservation known for its corn, beans, watermelon, and squash. However, they also teach and encourage more backyard gardens for local food production. Hopi has a large ranching community with just under 300 cattle ranchers.

For the Tribe's youth, there is the newly re-established 4-H club offering the Hopi Healthy Living Club for the Tribe's high schoolers and STEM YOUniversity programming for middle school youth. The Hopi FRTEP teaches about more than just agriculture, and has extensive programming for family health, consumer science, financial literacy, and food preservation.

Agent Sekaquaptewa's Proudest Accomplishments

Having been born and raised in the community, FRTEP Agent Susan Sekaquaptewa is no stranger to the Hopi Reservation. It's this connection to her people that she believes aids in her success. Though, it would be wrong to say that Agent Sekaquaptewa has not done most of the heavy lifting on her own. This year, she was able to hire a part-time staff assistant. With this added capacity, Agent Sekaquaptewa has been able to more than double her programmatic efforts. By leveraging her partnerships within the community, Agent Sekaquaptewa was even able to move into a new joint office and classroom space. The school that hosts her FRTEP office also benefitted from this arrangement as Agent Sekaquaptewa was able to build two hoop houses for gardening and launch a new 4-H club there.

Susan Sekaquaptewa remembers the previous FRTEP agent on the Hopi reservation, though she was never quite certain what he and the program offered. Now as the agent herself, she's working to make her programs as widely known and accessible as possible. Agent Sekaquaptewa thinks that her efforts are paying off, as she's seeing a real shift in the community's outlook on shaping its own future.

"My work wouldn't be possible without the community."
- Susan Sekaquaptewa, FRTEP Agent at Hopi Tribe

Hualapai Nation

The Hualapai Nation is located in a very remote and rural part of northwest Arizona and is bordered by the Colorado River. There is one main town, Peach Springs, located on the plateau, about an hour's drive from the river. The river supports the Hualapai Nation's tourism industry which includes day-long riverboat tours, helicopter rides, restaurants, and a hotel, all located around Grand Canyon West. The Hualapai Nation is home to five different cattle ranching districts and a large forestry industry. The Hualapai Nation also has several successful youth programs, including a program that teaches kids about the macroinvertebrates that live in and the plants that grow around the Colorado River.

The FRTEP at Hualapai Nation works closely with the Nation's cultural center and community garden and has a strong partnership with their Department of Natural Resources.

Agent Alden's Proudest Accomplishments

Agent Elisabeth Alden has lived within the Hualapai Nation for twelve years and lived on the Hopi Reservation for twelve years before that. Although she is not a Tribal member herself, Agent Alden loves working alongside Native Americans and feels that after ten years, she is able to contribute to and be a valuable part of the Hualapai Nation community.

When it comes to serving Tribal youth, Agent Alden has big plans for the Hualapai Nation's FRTEP. She wants to bring more 4-H youth development programming to the community, including activities about gardening, ranching, forestry, and getting the youth out in nature. Agent Alden also plays a huge role in the community garden as horticulture and entomology are her true passions. She plans to expand the garden this year and hopes to help others understand how to grow, maintain, harvest, and preserve crops.

Though this year has been made more difficult with the COVID-19 pandemic, Agent Alden still has plenty to be proud about. Aside from her work with the Tribal youth, she worked with the University of Arizona's Equine specialist and a local veterinarian to put on the second Annual Immunization and Equine Health event. Families who attended the event received equine first aid kits, learned to check the animals' temperatures, and received general advice about caring for their horses. This year saw even more participants than the previous year's event.

"I really believe in FRTEP and the strength of it, but it needs funding. It has phenomenal impact, but we need to continue to build it up."

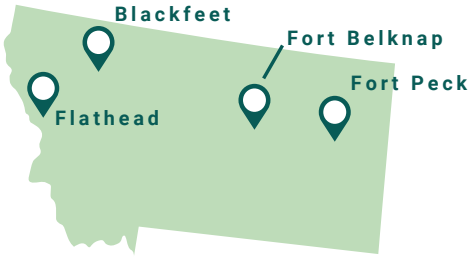
- Elisabeth Alden, FRTEP Agent at Hualapai Nation

SPOTLIGHT ON MONTANA

Overview of Montana

With over 2,100 Native American producers in 2017 [1], Montana ranks sixth in terms of number of American Indian/Alaska Native agricultural producers in the state. In 2017, Montana had a total of 47,236 producers [2]. This means that AI/ANs accounted for nearly 4.4% of the state's producers, while making up 6.7% of the state's overall population [3]. Montana has four FRTEP agents (nearly 12% of all FRTEP agents).

Currently, Montana's four FRTEP agents serve 4 distinct Tribes. The Fort Belknap Reservation, served by one agent, is compromised of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Tribes. The Fort Peck reservation, served by one agent, includes the Sioux and Assiniboine Tribes. The Flathead Reservation, served by one agent, includes the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, as well as the Pend d'Oreilles Tribe. The Blackfeet Indian reservation is home only to the Blackfeet Nation and is also served by one agent. Montana has 7 federally recognized Tribes, 57% of which are served by a FRTEP agent.



Below is a table detailing the number of AI/AN- owned farms in Montana, and the market value of the products sold by these farms [4]. The following pages will highlight agents we interviewed and the reservations they serve. It is in these pages that the final interview responses regarding proudest accomplishments will be included.

RESERVATION	# OF FARMS OPERATED BY AI/ANs IN ACRES	MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS SOLD
Fort Belknap	117 Farms; 464,776 Acres	$9,611,000
Fort Peck	72 Farms; 369,019 Acres	$8,671,000
Flathead	218 Farms; 975,733 Acres	$11,988,000
Blackfeet	478 Farms; 619,688 Acres	$28,932,000

Fort Belknap Reservation

The Fort Belknap Reservation, located in northern Montana, is home to both the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes. Agriculture is the reservation's largest economic output, though there are many small producers with 150-300 heads of cattle. Fort Belknap is also home to two herds of buffalo, totaling almost 700. One herd has been around since the 1980s, and the second, newer herd is made up of Yellowstone National Park buffalo.

Located at the northern end of the reservation, FRTEP Agent Elizabeth Werk works to make sure that her office's programming reaches the whole community. She manages the experimental orchard, which has 100 apple, pear, and plum trees, with peaches are on the horizon as well. Many of the other FRTEP activities Agent Werk facilitates revolve around the community garden and food preservation. She is also working to get a slaughterhouse up and running and is now sorting out the storage and distribution.

Agent Werk's Proudest Accomplishments

Two years ago, the Fort Belknap Reservation had one 4-H club that ran an annual small fair and auction. With Agent Werk at the helm, two more 4-H clubs were successfully created, and the three clubs now have a combined membership of 55 students. Getting students to join 4-H always presented a bit of a challenge, as many of the students involved do not come from 4-H backgrounds. Agent Werk worked to build up interest and get more students involved. Just a few weeks into year, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. While producer workshops and education opportunities can be moved online, there were concerns about transitioning the 4-H annual fair and auction into a virtual format.

Though this presented a challenge for Agent Werk, she was successfully able to pivot to an online fair and auction. In a private treaty sale, potential bidders could explore a digital booklet showcasing the students' work before placing their bids online. Though shifting to an online format can be incredibly challenging, particularly in Tribal communities where internet access may be limited, the Fort Belknap Reservation community came out in full force to support the students. All of the animals raised for the auction were successfully sold. After butchering, the meat was then distributed to the Fort Belknap Reservation's senior center, where it was frozen and distributed to Tribal elders throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only was Agent Werk able to help make sure that the 4-H students' efforts did not go to waste, but the products of the students' labor were also ultimately able to help address food insecurity concerns.

"The older generations *had* to farm. Now, we try to teach the Tribal youth that they *get* to farm."

- Elizabeth Werk, FRTEP Agent at Fort Belknap Reservation

Fort Peck Reservation

The Fort Peck Reservation is located in northeastern Montana along the Missouri River. The reservation is the largest water rights holder in the state. Because of the river and Fort Peck's location in the state's flatter region, the Reservation is able to accommodate both considerable cropping and cattle ranching. The Tribe also has a cultural herd of Yellowstone National Park buffalo. The Reservation covers over 2 million acres and has a tribal population of roughly 5,500 members from two separate Tribes: the Assiniboine and the Sioux.

The FRTEP projects on the Fort Peck Reservation include a classroom pumpkin patch, the buffalo value-added project, and a tribal agriculture series for farmers and ranchers.

Agent Becker's Proudest Accomplishments

Agent Wendy Becker is a prime example of a FRTEP agent who can adjust her programming to meet the needs of the Tribal communities she serves. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Agent Becker led classes for both adults and Tribal youth to teach them how to take the Yellowstone buffalo meat and turn it into sausage and jerky.

Recognizing that Tribal communities have been affected by the COVID-19 at a disproportionate rate compared to other demographics, Agent Becker has worked to keep the Fort Peck community safe by limiting the programming her office offers. Instead, Agent Becker has personally been completing the activities she started prior to the pandemic, like the buffalo project. Rather than endanger Tribal members by having them continue to turn the buffalo meat into sausage and jerky, Agent Becker is doing the work herself, and then donating it to the tribal elder program. While this wasn't how she saw the program going, she's remained flexible during the pandemic, prioritizing the health of Tribal members and the food security of Tribal elders. She distributed 225 packages of value-added buffalo meat to Tribal elders, along with instructions for preparation and background information on where the meat came from.

The pumpkin patch has also been able to still provide produce to the local schools, as Agent Becker harvested the pumpkins herself, rather than putting the children at risk. She donated the pumpkins to the schools, along with printed instructions for a learning activity. While these are not the programs she initially designed, they are still offering extension to the Tribe, all while keeping the community safer.

"COVID-19 has hit Tribal communities so much harder, so it's my job to offer extension activities that prioritize the safety of the community."

- Wendy Becker, FRTEP Agent at Fort Peck Reservation

Flathead Reservation

The Flathead Reservation, located in northwestern Montana, is home to three distinct Tribes: the Confederated Salish, the Pend d'Oreille, and the Kootenai. The reservation covers 1.3 million acres, with its rolling prairies used for cattle grazing and its eastern lands for agriculture and forestry.

The Flathead Reservation FRTEP has programs which address all facets of extension. Agricultural programs include the 'Grow It Till U Make It' program, which addressed food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic by teaching participants how to grow, prepare, and preserve their own food. The 4-H All A Buzz About Bees Apiary teaches youth about value-added products and food sovereignty. Youth opportunities also include a K-12 mentoring program and a teen mental health program which promotes healthy physical and mental choices. Family consumer science programs includes Mental Health First Aid, and Master Gardening and Food Preservation classes. Extension personnel also participate in professional development opportunities to build leadership capacities within Tribal Communities.

Agent Richey's Proudest Accomplishments

Agent Brenda Richey's philosophy is that as a FRTEP agent, it is her job to facilitate educational opportunities between the University and the Tribal community. She believes it is a privilege to learn about the people she serves and to share that knowledge, through a culturally appropriate lens with the University. This sharing of culture and knowledge then opens the door for her to facilitate research based educational opportunities that otherwise may not be available in her Tribal community.

Agent Richey's proudest accomplishment is seeing her office evolve into a more holistic offering of Extension programing. Even in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, she has seen relationships develop, community partnerships created, and educational opportunities offered. While the majority of these activities were virtual, they still happened! Together they have helped build a foundation that her FRTEP can build on, both virtually and eventually in person.

One of Agent Richey's favorite quotes is, “If you give a man a fish, he will be hungry tomorrow. If you teach a man to fish, he will be richer forever” (Fred Nelson, 1961). FRTEP is a beautiful example of understanding what our communities need now and supporting their future. Agent Richey thinks that every Tribe should have its own FRTEP office with equal access and opportunity for everything that extension offers. While this is not yet a reality for the FRTEP, she believes that the door is at least now opened to such a vision for the future.

"I am a facilitator. I bring people and resources together to bridge the gap between the university and the Tribal community."

- Brenda Richey, FRTEP Agent at Flathead Reservation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

KEY FRTEP TAKEAWAYS

25%

Rate of food insecurity among Native Americans, double that of non-Natives.

PROMISED

Treaties which promised agricultural extension to Tribes have no expiry date.

A SOLUTION

FRTEP Agent

The Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) Agents help address food insecurity by providing extension to the Tribal communities they serve.

Tribal Communities & Reservations

AUTHORIZED FOR

$6.2 MILLION* IN 1990

***$12,408,633.51 in 2021 with Inflation**

APPROPRIATED FOR

$1 MILLION* IN 1990

***$2,001,392.50 in 2021 with Inflation**

FUNDED FOR

$3 MILLION IN 2021

Nowhere Near Authorized 1990 Funding, With or Without Inflation

ADDRESS AGENTS' NEEDS

Surveyed and interviewed FRTEP agents have similar thoughts on the program: they love their jobs and the communities they serve. They also largely agree that the current FRTEP funding levels and competitive grant cycle do not allow the Agents to do their best work.

More Certainty, Resources, & Funding

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FRTEP versus the Cooperative Extension Service

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