



# Public Meeting # 3

September 21-22, 2022

Day One



**Cecilia Hernandez**  
Designated Federal Officer



**Dr. Jewel Bronaugh**  
Co-Chair and Deputy Secretary  
of Agriculture



**Arturo S. Rodriguez**  
Co-Chair and President of the  
United Farm Workers of America

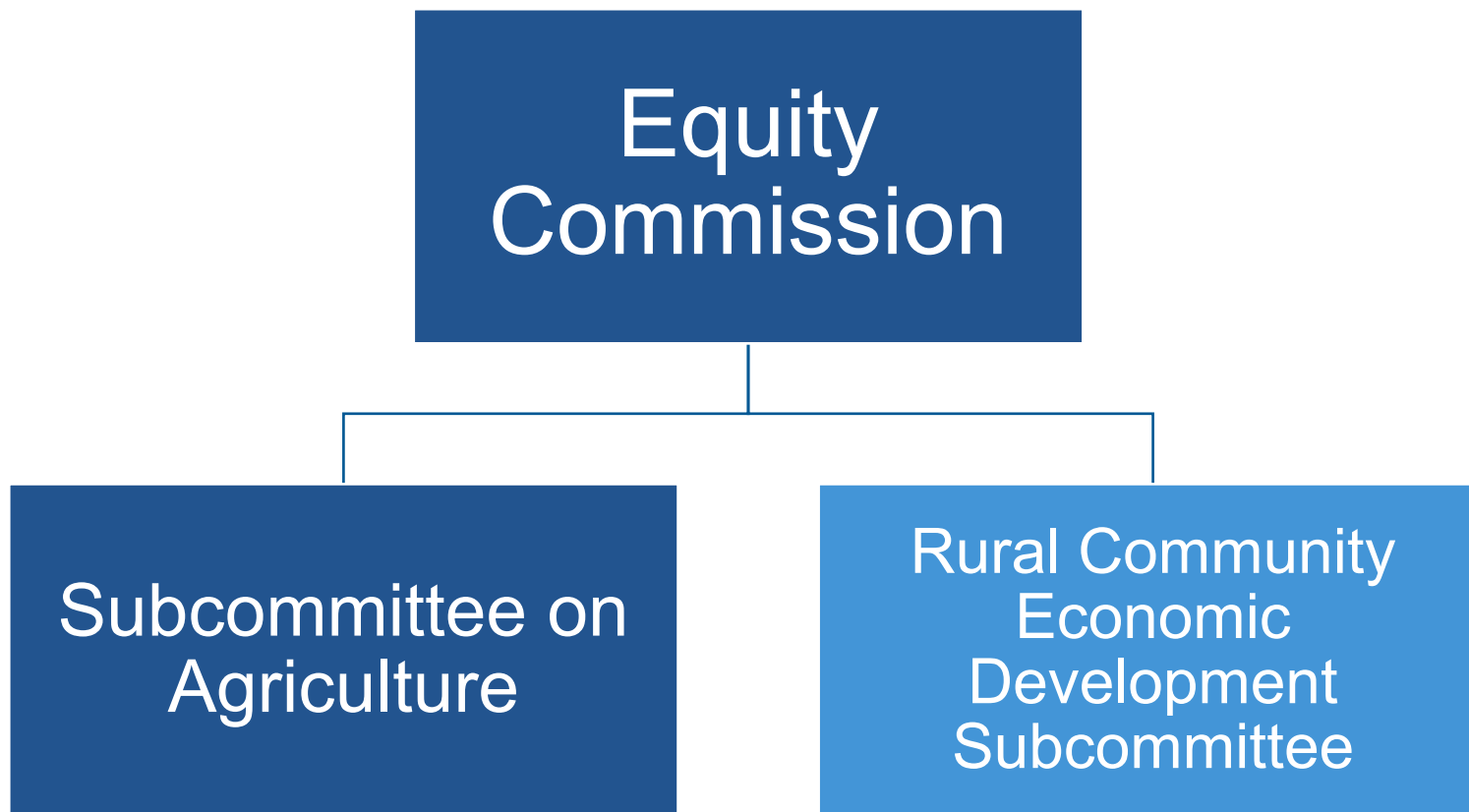


**Dr. Laurence B. Alexander**  
University Chancellor



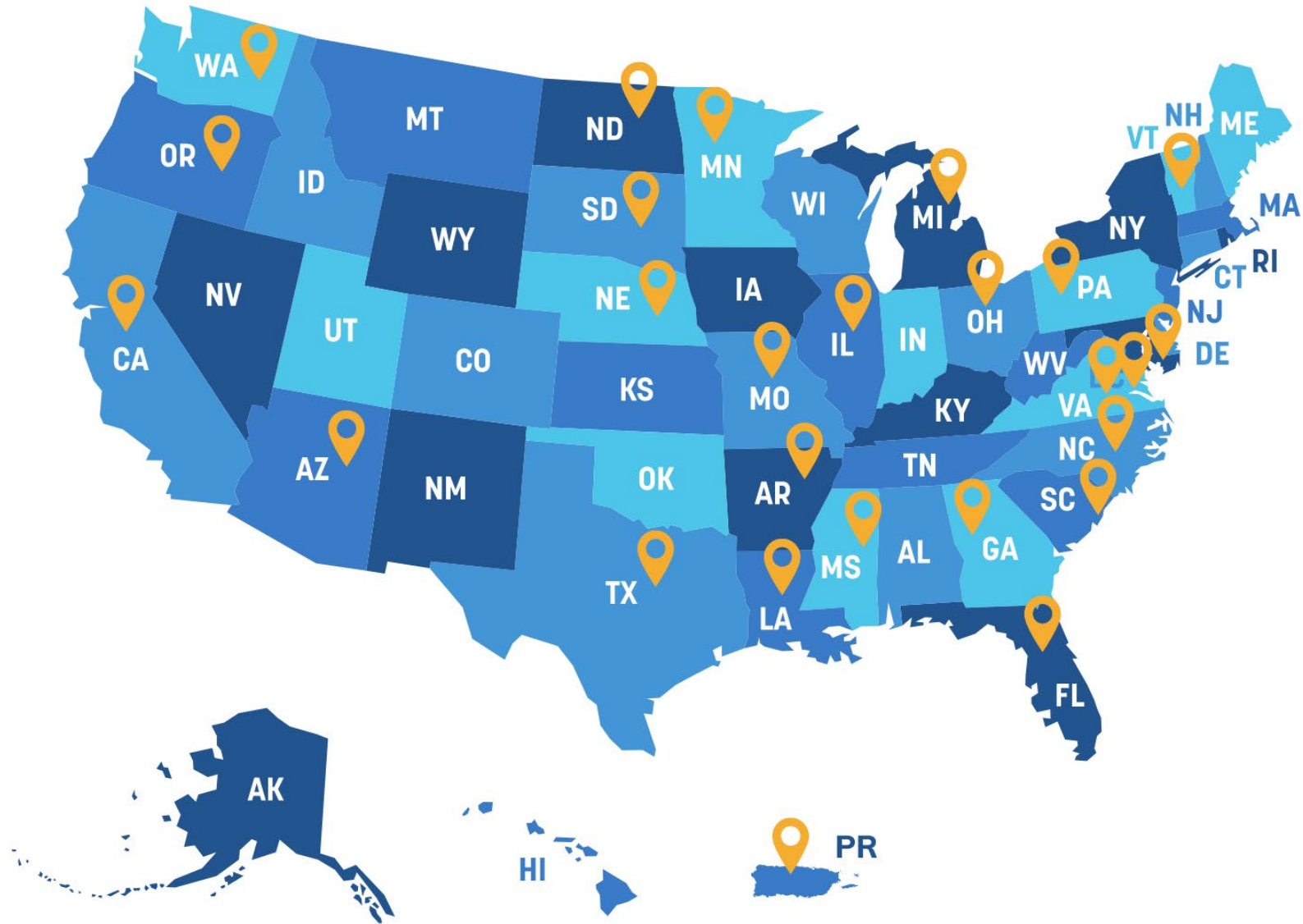
**Dr. Bruce McGowan**  
Interim Dean of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Human Sciences

- Rural Community Economic Development (RCED) Subcommittee
  - Goals and Objectives
  - Member Introductions
- Status and Discussion of Historical Recommendations
- Lunch Break
- Summer Workgroup Updates
- Presentation from Access Workgroup
- Presentation from Department-wide Workgroup
- Adjourn





# Representation Across the U.S.



- The RCED Subcommittee is charged with providing recommendations on USDA programs and issues related to rural economic opportunities and community resilience and ensuring that every rural American has equitable access to USDA programs designed to advance rural community economic development.
- These recommendations should enhance the ability of underserved communities to access USDA programs and increase their capacity to break the cycle of persistent poverty.
- The end goal is that communities have equitable access to USDA programs and services that effectively reduce disparities and advance equity within and for rural and tribal communities.



- Improving technical assistance, capacity building, and place-based economic development strategies necessary for navigating and accessing USDA programs and services.
- Improving access to capital for business growth and development in rural and tribal communities.
- Improving USDA's program delivery strategy to ensure investments are equitable now and into the future, including data-driven outreach and program design.
- Reducing climate pollution, implementation of environmental justice standards, and better management of natural resources.
- Minimizing disproportionate effects of climate change by increasing infrastructure resilience and economic support to rural and tribal communities.
- Improving access to high-speed internet for all rural and tribal residents.
- Ensuring equitable access to safe, affordable housing.

- Ensuring equitable access to safe, affordable, and resilient water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Improving equitable and sustainable access to natural resources, including recreational facilities.
- Enhancing customer service via improved USDA staffing, training, IT modernization, and transformation of the organizational culture within USDA.
- Improving use of data and technology both to ensure access to programs and services and to increase accountability.
- Improving USDA performance measures and program evaluation so that the implementation of recommendations can be monitored, tracked, and reported with real outcomes.
- Making USDA accountable by requesting an implementation strategy and an action plan on recommendations.



Calvin Allen



Cheryal Hills



Curtis Wynn



David  
Carrasquillo-Medrano



Doug O'Brien



Lakota Vogel



Larry Holland



LaTonya  
Keaton



Nils  
Christoffersen



Shonterria  
Charleston



Terry Rambler



Valerie Beel



Name, State, Position and Organization

**BREAK**





LUNCH BREAK



**Charlie Rawls**



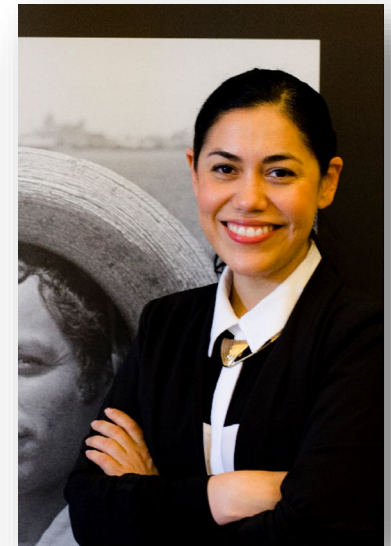
**Toni Stanger- McLaughlin**



**Michelle Hughes**



**Elizabeth Lower-Basch**



**Dr. Mireya Loza**



- USDA Leadership provided a set of goals for the Equity Commission and the Agriculture Subcommittee during the first public meeting (Feb).
- Members organized the goals into three focus areas: Access, Service, and Department-wide.
- Following this, workgroups were formed to support each focus area.
- At the second public meeting (May), members brainstormed potential recommendations for the interim report.
- As part of their preparatory work, members organized the brainstormed list of recommendations into the established workgroups. Two additional workgroups were formed: farmworkers and nutrition.
- Over the next day and a half, you will hear the workgroup members present their proposed recommendations for the interim report.

- **Access:** Todd Corley, Yvonne Lee, Shirley Sherrod, Shorlette Ammons, Hazell Reed, Alexis Racelis, Shari Rogge-Fidler, Jennie Stephens, PJ Haynie
- **Service:** Ron Rainey, Toni Stanger-McLaughlin, Gina Eubanks, Janssen Hang, Kari Jo Lawrence
- **Department-Wide:** Ron Rainey, Todd Corley, Ertharin Cousin, Yvonne Lee, Elizabeth Lower-Basch, Charlie Rawls, Savi Horne, Michelle Hughes, Gary Matteson, Sarah Vogel
- **Farmworker:** Poppy Sias-Hernandez, Mireya Loza, Arturo Rodriguez, Erica Lomeli Corcoran
- **Nutrition:** Elizabeth Lower-Basch, Yvonne Lee, Gina Eubanks, Mireya Loza



**Dr. Ronald Rainey**  
Department-wide and  
Service Workgroup



**Todd Corley**  
Access Workgroup



**Poppy Sias-Hernandez**  
Farmworker Workgroup

- The purpose of the workgroup presentations is to present the recommendations proposed and the background. It is not a time to deliberate.
- Each member will be given between 5-20 minutes for each recommendation.
- Clarifying questions are welcome, but we must be conscious of our time and ensure we are not entering into deliberation.
- Questions to consider during the presentation:
  - What is the problem?
  - What is the solution?
  - How does it address equity?
  - How is it a systemic change?

- **Share** the floor, only one speaker at a time- everyone speaks once before someone speaks twice (on a particular line item)
- **Stay focused** on the issue at hand
- Be **specific** and **succinct** in request for:
  - **Clarification:** Ask about the meaning of wording or terminology used
- Use “I” statements when expressing point of view; keep stakeholders in mind
- Acknowledge breadth of pre-work; **trust** the process *and* each other

**Workgroup Objective:** Increase equitable access through systemic changes of all policies and practices across all of USDA.

**For each Proposed Recommendation:**

- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- How does it address equity?
- How is it a systemic change?

## **1. Ensure equitable access to information and knowledge including 1:1 matching for land grant universities, federally designated Minority Serving Institutions, and Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities, and Community Based Organizations.**

- a. Enhance funding and support for extension services (1890 Land Grant, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 1994 Tribal Land Grants) and outreach (community based) to small and specialty crop producers and non-traditional farmers.
- b. Enhance equity by dedicating a pool/percentage of funds specifically for these institutions.
- c. Address federal designations associated with institutions receiving funds in order to:
  - 1. Build and maintain capacity over time by naming institutions in each state, by population.
  - 2. Refine designations to ensure institutions/organizations representative of populations/designations have access to/ compete for funds vs perpetuating inequities.

## **2. Provide non-loan options for producers to prevent the creation of heirs' property and reduce the barriers this type of land ownership encounters when accessing USDA programs.**

- a. Agriculture Secretary to appropriate funds for grants to be made available to community-based nonprofit organizations to address/resolve heirs' property and fractionated land issues for underserved producers through the delivery of legal technical assistance, legal education and drafting of estate plans. Loans can be made available to these underserved producers to consolidate property interests.
- b. Agriculture Secretary to require State Natural Resources Conservationists to create a separate funding pool of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost-share funds for heirs' property owners and socially disadvantaged producers. By including these producers within a separate funding pool and allowing them to compete with each other, it is likely that more of these producers would be funded. Currently, the state conservationists in Alabama and South Carolina have used their discretion to establish such a pool for these producers.



### **3. Maintain and expand on the level of funding and technical assistance related to the Highly Fractionated Indian Land Loan Program (HFIL), created by the 2014 Farm Bill.**

- a. Engage with indigenous and community-based organizations and other interested entities in ensuring that heirship issues also address “fractionization” issues that Tribal communities face.

## **4. Ensure Equitable Access to USDA Services for Persons Who Are Limited English Proficient (LEP).**

- a. Designate an executive level career staff member to be housed within the Office of Civil Rights to be responsible for Language Access guidance, compliance and oversight.
- b. Cultivate a sustainable department-wide culture of equity and inclusion by investing in long term financial partnerships with minority servicing educational institutions, tribal, territorial and community service organizations to build Language Access capacity for current and next generations of agricultural partners and stakeholders and department workforce.

## 5. Improve USDA Loan Programs and Processes.

- a. Clarify and hone Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan processes to better understand access issues for all underserved populations, including language, and eligibility criteria for both new and experienced farmers and ranchers. Be as specific as the law allows for who the underserved or discriminated populations are and how to reach them.
- b. Initiate/increase loan grant modification programs (e.g. funds or time) with the USDA's FSA loan programs for underserved populations.
- c. Identify further remaining gaps between FSA loans and USDA grant programs for underserved populations, especially any gaps with the Inflation Reduction Act and current USDA initiatives.
- d. Change or redefine the term "distressed borrower" to include those that have not yet or in the past entered delinquency; however, are close to or not adequately operating in a manner that will allow them to continue to provide food and fiber to all Americans and abroad.

**BREAK**

**Workgroup Objective:** Create and reinforce a USDA culture of equity, belonging, inclusion, and opportunity for both internal and external stakeholders and activities.

## **For each Proposed Recommendation:**

- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- How does it address equity?
- How is it a systemic change?

## **6. Ensure equitable funding to community-led land access and transition projects.**

- a. Establish a new initiative [leveraging 1006 funds] to direct funding to community-led land access projects designed to create land security for farmers. This USDA funding should be available to a wide variety of entities, such as tribes, municipalities, non-profits, and cooperatives, with priority for projects led by and benefitting Socially Disadvantaged and Economically Distressed farmers and ranchers. This funding should be available as a line of credit or grant prior to purchase, enabling eligible entities to act quickly in the real estate market.
- b. Authorize mandatory, recurring funding for land-access related data gathering, including the Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land survey that includes data collection on farmer demographics and economic data by county.
- c. Amend and fund the Commission on Farm Transition established in the 2018 Farm Bill to study land access and transition to inform policy setting that facilitates equitable access to land.

## **6. Ensure equitable funding to community-led land access and transition projects.**

- d. Provide the Office of Tribal Relations with the authority to immediately appoint a Designated Federal Official from their staff to help facilitate the nomination process for seating the Tribal Advisory Committee authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. This committee will provide advice to USDA on tribal related issues and policies throughout the Department.
- e. Continue investment in the Heirs' Property Relending Program and expand funding eligibility to include administration of program funds by relending entities.
- f. Ensure USDA land-related programs are accessible to all young, BIPOC farmers specifically, and next generation farmers as a whole, by accommodating eligibility for collective, cooperative, and communal non-family entities, and tracking and publicly reporting demographics data on program participants.

## **6. Ensure equitable funding to community-led land access and transition projects.**

- g.** Provide continued funding for cooperative agreements with community-based organizations, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cooperative Agreements for Racial Justice and Equity.
- h.** Implement thorough, racial equity informed evaluation and reporting requirements to not only measure who is benefitting, but to measure program effectiveness in facilitating secure land tenure for young and BIPOC farmers.



## **7. Include equitable climate actions in USDA conservation programs to address environmental justice.**

- a. Increase incentive payments for implementation of climate-resilient practices to ensure limited-resource farmers can participate in cost-share programs. Automatically provide Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) advance payments for Socially Disadvantaged and Economically Distressed producers. We recommend that (NRCS) reduce the required number of years a producer must be in production on a particular parcel of land to qualify for (EQIP).
- b. Adjust EQIP and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice standards to better integrate, and to equitably compensate for use of Indigenous knowledge and land management practices. Federal conservation programming should streamline support for producers embodying these practices, not a barrier to accessing NRCS programming. We recommend that USDA take into consideration non-traditional methods of agriculture (i.e. subsistence farming, aquaculture/fishing) for disaster relief and other assistance programs offered by the Agency.

## **7. Include equitable climate actions in USDA conservation programs to address environmental justice.**

- c. Prioritize research that helps small-scale, diversified farmers implement conservation practices and measure their climate mitigation impacts through methods with a proven track record of success. We recommend that USDA take into consideration non-traditional methods of agriculture (i.e. subsistence farming, aquaculture/fishing) for disaster relief and other assistance programs offered by the Agency.
- d. Provide funding for technical assistance to be culturally appropriate and invest in local experts and communities through cooperative agreements with tribes, acequias, and other experts.
- e. Support climate justice solutions that target resources to BIPOC farmers and protect farmworkers from hazardous working conditions due to climate change.
- f. Require the collection and public reporting of demographic data on all conservation programs to better understand how producers who are young and BIPOC are utilizing the conservation programs.

## **7. Include equitable climate actions in USDA conservation programs to address environmental justice.**

- g. Develop science-based climate-smart agriculture definitions that include Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and further prioritize practices that afford the greatest climate benefit, such as incorporating cover crops, perennial crops, managed grazing of perennial pasture, and other investments in soil health.
- h. Codify the new Micro Farm program through the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to improve access to crop insurance for operations that are diversified, organic, and/or selling in local, regional, and specialty markets.
- i. Expand direct marketing prices within the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or allow farmers to use their own yields and historic pricing data to more equitably serve farmers who sell direct-to-consumer or receive a premium on their crops.
- j. Administer NAP as an on-ramp to more holistic risk management programs such as Whole Farm Revenue Protection program and the Micro Farm program.

## **7. Include equitable climate actions in USDA conservation programs to address environmental justice.**

- k. Increase the maximum allowable farm revenue for Socially Disadvantaged and Economically Distressed applicants to the Micro Farm program.
- l. Mandate NRCS provide the public with an impact report on how EQIP funding has been used, and the impact those dollars have had on the environment.

**8. Increase funding for the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP) and remove the competitive nature of the current application process to allow for more collaboration across Tribal extensions.**

## 9. Enhance Private-Public Partnership through Pilot Programs.

- a. Pilot a "private-public" partnership whereby the private sector partner matches each \$1,000 award from USDA to a nonprofit or community-based organization that is serving members of a distressed community and has a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan on file with the USDA's office of equity.
- b. Pilot a "private-public" partnership whereby the private sector partner matches each \$1,000 award from USDA to a non-profit, community-based organization or college/university that is helping farmers, ranchers create farm management plans that generate more output while conserving water resources and rebuilding soil health.
- c. Pilot a "private-public" partnership whereby the private sector partner provides financial assistance (e.g., renewable tuition-scholarship) to an admitted student attending a land grant university; federally designated Minority Serving Institution; or a Hispanic Serving Agriculture College and University (the USDA and said private sector partner will select the student recipients).

## **10. Institutionalize an equity office at the Department that drives compliance and culture change across all of USDA.**

- a. Utilize existing leadership structures with line authority, in close coordination with the Equity Officer and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, to provide consistent leadership attention for institutional change and organizational accountability.
- b. Task the Deputy Secretary, through a Departmental regulation, to review Agency equity plans and ensure, through the annual budget process, that those plans are faithfully carried out and senior officers are accountable for making measurable improvements in equity in programs and services.
- c. The Deputy Secretary should use any staff and resources under its control, including the Office of Budget and Program Analysis to carry out these responsibilities.

**11. Support legislation to provide standing authority and accountability for the Secretary and senior leadership to carry out a continuous program to measurably improve the equitable availability and distribution of services and programs' benefits to all eligible Americans.**

- a. Ensure all policies and practices support equity.
- b. Use data, studies, and careful analysis to identify gaps and areas of opportunity to improve equity.
- c. Encourage all eligible Americans to participate in USDA programs and services.
- d. Address and remove barriers and impediments.
- e. Make all efforts to improve equity and be transparent with Congress and the public.



**12. Conduct an annual convening on Equity to have data available to inform the ongoing work of the Equity Commission.**

**13. Direct the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to include subsistence farmers and ranchers in the next Census of Agriculture to account for the nature of many traditional forms of tribal agriculture.**

**14. Under existing USDA Secretary's existing authorities, conduct periodic audit across USDA system-wide to look at service by race, gender, etc. Publish results on the USDA website and release underlying data to independent researchers.**

- a. Conduct an analysis of all program complaints received over the past 5 years and identify patterns for complaints, looking for programs, specific offices, and types of discrimination that have been alleged. These patterns should be used as a basis for identifying immediate fixes that can be made (e.g. making buildings and websites accessible, translating materials into additional required languages), prioritizing audits and statistical analysis of disparities in services received.
- b. Conduct periodic audit across USDA system-wide to look at service by race, gender, etc. Publish results on USDA website. Release underlying data (with personally identifiable information removed) for independent researchers to replicate and build on official audits.

## **15. Enhance and improve writing job descriptions/hiring requirements that include cultural competencies.**

- a. Include cultural competencies in all job descriptions and annual reviews.
- b. Hire more Native career employees, especially for roles that are Tribal-serving.
- c. Create an Equity Corps to develop the next generation of USDA leadership.

## **16. Move discrimination complaints to National Appeals Division (NAD) and out of the Civil Rights office.**

- a. If a NAD-eligible appeal also involves an allegation of civil rights discrimination (e.g., loan denial and allegation of discrimination because of a prohibited basis), a USDA NAD administrative judge should hear the allegation of discrimination within the context of the substantive appeal and the facts, rules, regulations and laws of the program requirements involved in the appeal, and that analysis should include the law and rules against discrimination. Successful appeals that involve discrimination should be eligible for all kinds of relief offered by NAD, including equitable relief.
- b. Civil rights appellants whose appeals are pending at Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) at the time that NAD is able to consider civil rights issues and claims should be offered all possible support by USDA so as to reach a speedy and satisfactory resolution of their OASCR appeals. After the time that NAD administrative judges are allowed to consider civil rights claims, an appellant will have a choice of whether to use the OASCR discrimination resolution process or the NAD dispute resolution process. USDA should provide services and support to help OASCR and NAD appellants reach a speedy and satisfactory resolution of their appeals.

## **17. Transform and adequately fund the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.**

- a. Have an outsider to come in and train the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) staff how to investigate and solve complaints.
- b. Secure a realistic budget on the front end to allow the full process to be successful.

## **18. Elevate the Office of Tribal Relations from its current office to become The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Tribal Affairs.**

- a. Establish Deputy Assistant Undersecretary position.
- b. Create Tribal Liaison positions within each agency, mission area and office; if positions already exist, they should be elevated within their area to serve the highest ranking official or career leader (example: Assistant Secretary, Administrator of Chief).

- Day 1 Recap
  - Access workgroup presentations
  - Department-wide workgroup presentation
- Day 2 Agenda
  - Farmworker workgroup presentation
  - Nutrition workgroup presentation
  - Service workgroup presentation
  - Deliberate on all recommendations and vote





**Cecilia Hernandez**  
Designated Federal Officer

# Thank You for Joining!

Please join us tomorrow using the same link.

To provide public written comments, please email the Equity Commission inbox at [equitycommission@usda.gov](mailto:equitycommission@usda.gov). Comment Period closes 10/7.

To learn more about equity initiatives at USDA, visit [www.usda.gov/equity](http://www.usda.gov/equity).



**USDA** EQUITY COMMISSION  
*Shaping Change at USDA*

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# Public Meeting # 3

September 21-22, 2022

Day Two



**Cecilia Hernandez**  
Designated Federal Officer

- Public Comment Period
- Presentation from Farmworker Workgroup
- Presentation from Nutrition Workgroup
- Presentation from Service Workgroup
- Lunch
- Deliberate and Vote on Interim Report Recommendations
- Adjourn

## Oral Comment Process

- Commenters signed up prior to meeting during registration
- Commenters were offered a pre-meeting to prepare and solve tech issues
- Commenters will now have 1:30 minute per oral comment

## How to Provide Written Comments

- Submit comments to [equitycommission@usda.gov](mailto:equitycommission@usda.gov)
- Comment period will close on 10/7
- Compilation of written comments will be posted to the website

**Workgroup Objective:** Ensure the farmworker community has all available resources and protections to allow equitable access, education, and opportunity to fully participate in the Agricultural economy.

## **For each Proposed Recommendation:**

- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- How does it address equity?
- How is it a systemic change?

**19. Institutionalize Equity Office that drives compliance and culture change across all of USDA, and includes staff and resources dedicated to specific constituencies, such as farmworkers.**

- a. Establish an Interagency Migrant Service Council for infrastructure on coordinating across agency – interagency work process.
- b. Office should be housed in the Office of the Secretary.



## **20. Ensure farmworkers' access to USDA nutrition programs**

- a. Improve language access.
- b. Create targeted outreach materials.
- c. Develop inclusive and accessible distribution programs and application sites.
- d. Ensure immigrant farmworkers are not discouraged from applying for or receiving nutritional supports by requiring a social security number when not needed.

## 21. Fund Farmworkers.

- a. USDA should support funding for farmworker organizations via the farm bill, at a minimum of \$5 billion, to improve farm labor working conditions, labor protections, wages, access to justice, supply and stability, and safety and training.
- b. USDA should leverage existing and ongoing funding and resources to promote improved farmworker living and working conditions, workplace safety compliance and farmworker economic opportunities through funding opportunities, funding requirements, penalties, and incentives.
- c. USDA should ensure that spending for employer grants and procurement promotes improved farmworker living and working conditions by requiring that employers throughout the supply chain demonstrate labor law compliance and meet “high road” workplace standards, such as collective bargaining and other metrics for improved workplace protections, to qualify for such funding or procurement. USDA should finalize and improve upon its pending procurement policy.

## 21. Fund Farmworkers.

- d. USDA should take action to ensure additional funding opportunities such as existing and ongoing grants or other programs include requirements and incentives regarding farm worker living and working conditions
- e. USDA should take executive action to ensure funding for farmworker organizations to help ensure improved farm worker working and living conditions and to ensure farmworker access to economic opportunities.
- f. USDA should include farmworkers in existing funding opportunities.
  - This recommendation is intended to support farm workers and farm worker organizations OR
  - This recommendation is intended to support farm worker organizations not farm labor contractors (FLCs).

## **22. Request the USDA Congressional Research Service or Government of Accountability Office report on farm worker access to USDA programs.**

- a. The GAO report shall study farm worker living and working conditions that are essential to understanding the needs of farmworker populations. This study would help the USDA better serve both farmers and farmworkers.
- b. The GAO report shall report on farm worker access to USDA programs. The body conducting the study should consult with farmworker organizations.
- c. Fund and conduct a bi-annually cadenced GOA or CRS report to ensure compliance and systems level changes for farmworkers.

## **For each Proposed Recommendation:**

- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- How does it address equity?
- How is it a systemic change?

**23. Support legislative action to remove eligibility restrictions on SNAP that disproportionately limit access to nutrition supports by people of color, including the restrictions on immigrants, residents of Puerto Rico, participants in the FDPIR, the time limit on benefit receipt, and the drug felony ban.**

**24. Continue to revise the thrifty food plan to reflect the needs of today's consumers, explore options for boosting the minimum benefit and increasing benefits more than annually during period of high inflation, and consider basing SNAP benefit levels on the low-cost food plan.**

**25. Monitor state SNAP agencies to ensure that SNAP is administered in a way that treats applicants and participants with dignity and respect, including holding states accountable for barriers to access, and requiring states to develop processes for beneficiaries to be involved in program and systems design and evaluation.**



**26. Review the nutrition programs to identify and remove any barriers to vendor and procurement opportunities for disadvantaged and underrepresented communities.**

**BREAK**

**Workgroup Objective:** Provide equitable and transparent access to all USDA services and resources for all rural and urban Communities.

**For each Proposed Recommendation:**

- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- How does it address equity?
- How is it a systemic change?

## **27. Enhance the role and financial investment in organizations (non-profit, non-governmental, community-based) to provide technical assistance.**

- a. Increase the institutional bandwidth both technically and financially to support small and specialty crop farmers.
- b. Increase the Department's institutional bandwidth both technically and financially to support young and underserved farmers and smaller scale operations.
- c. Invest in mediation and technical services for farmers transitioning and accessing land, in particular Heirship and Trust or Restricted property.

## **28. Address historical inequitable services by making County Committees more equitable.**

- a. Appoint a minority VOTING member in areas of high proportion of minority farmers without representation.
- b. Consider a percentage of representation required that is reflective of population for county committee member vote.
- c. Conduct targeted outreach to increase minority participation in County Committee elections. Given the nature of Tribal Governments and their membership/ citizenship, specific outreach should be created and implemented to provide awareness of the opportunity to serve through focused outreach.
- d. Expand capacity of county offices by including internet-based information and reducing complexities of applications for services and contracts.
- e. For the application process, increase bandwidth of county offices to assist with applications, and support with additional customer service training.

## **28. Address historical inequitable services by making County Committees more equitable.**

- f. Include the appeals process and role of the minority advisor in training for new committee members.
- g. Require training related to American Indian and Alaska Native issues where a high number of Tribal producers or Indian communities exist.
- h. Train county committees to exercise their voting powers and use the tools at their disposal to ensure members can vote without retribution or sense of retribution for voting actions.

**29. Hold USDA accountable to execute/conduct annual civil rights compliance reviews across all USDA agencies.**

- a. Encourage annual civil rights compliance reviews across all USDA agencies as mandated by the Farm Bill.
- b. Ensure reports and related data are accessible to the public and shared with Congress.
- c. Designate a responsible party for administering report by the end of each fiscal year.

## **30. Improve Customer Service.**

- a. USDA should have a dialogue with those receiving services to have a better understanding of unequitable service delivery.
- b. USDA should look at systemic data as well as individual experiences.
- c. All USDA agencies should seek customer service/feedback/survey/dial-in calls from customers.
- d. Improve compliance by ensuring customers receive a Receipt for Service.
  1. USDA should make the receipt for service as user friendly as possible for both USDA staff and customers.
  2. Incentivize proper record keeping. Lack of providing a receipt for service could result in employee reprimand.
  3. Include as part of training USDA staff to understand the accountability associated with unequitable feedback.



## **30. Improve Customer Service.**

- e. Allow for equitable language access for customer feedback opportunities.
- f. Include community- based organizations in USDA language contracts in order to interpret and translate with more accuracy.
- g. Train USDA staff to be culturally sensitive and have a clear understanding of who their constituents are. USDA staff should be knowledgeable of who they are serving. Ex. If a letter is sent, is it in the right language.
- h. Customers should be able to provide feedback on experiences through multiple methods, (i.e. QR Codes, Phone Calls). Use technology to ensure all USDA agencies offer customer service feedback to every client that enters an office. In some instances, the use of radio or newspaper print will also be needed.
- i. USDA needs more in-depth customer service evaluation, agency-wide and consistent customer service evaluations across USDA.



LUNCH BREAK

- Deliberation and voting portions of the meeting will be done by Equity Commission members only. The Deputy Secretary and Subcommittee members are not voting members.
- The goal is to go through all recommendations and deliberate on each one. We will be voting once all deliberation is complete.
- During deliberation, members can request to:
  - Make any final edits or amendments
  - Hold for further consideration.
- Votes are simple majority which is half plus one.

- For recommendations that have multiple sub bullets, members will be voting on the recommendation in its entirety (not each sub bullet).
- If there is ongoing disagreement on a given recommendations and for purposes of time, the recommendation may be tabled.
- Tabled recommendations will be brought up again at the end, if time allows; if not, further deliberation will be conducted at a future public meeting.
- Members have the option to request more information and if not satisfied then members have the option to abstain.
- Members have the option to request recommendation be postponed for further consideration at future public meeting; if a member requests this, DFO will ask for a vote to postpone. A simple majority will have to agree with the request to postponement.



## DELIBERATION & VOTING



BREAK



## DELIBERATION & VOTING

- Now that these recommendations have been voted on, the writing team will add them to the interim report.
- Once the interim report is finalized by the Equity Commission and submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture, it will become publicly available on the Equity Commission website.
- USDA will also engage the new RCED members to start working.
- These three bodies will continue to work through the Fall and Winter to develop more recommendations that will be included in the final report.
- The fourth public meeting is planned for Winter 2022-23.





**Cecilia Hernandez**  
Designated Federal Officer

# Thank You for Joining!

To provide public written comments, please email the Equity Commission inbox at [equitycommission@usda.gov](mailto:equitycommission@usda.gov). Comment Period closes October 7.

To learn more about equity initiatives at USDA, visit [www.usda.gov/equity](http://www.usda.gov/equity).



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