



Indian Country Extension Commission
Indian Country Extension Development under the Revised
Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program
Summary



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Summary of ICEC findings and proposed solutions

The Indian Country Extension Commission (ICEC) was formed in January 2022 to assess the current state of Indian Country Extension (ICE). The work of ICEC focused on two programs; The Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP) and the Tribal Colleges Extension Grant Program, commonly known as “1994 Extension.” These programs pursue Congressionally articulated priorities including advancing plant health and production and plant products; animal health and production and animal products; food safety, nutrition, and health; bioenergy, natural resources, and environment; agriculture systems and technology; and agriculture economics and rural communities. Additionally, they pursue current articulated priorities of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), including creating climate-smart agriculture and forestry; improving nutrition security; building new and better markets; building the workforce for the future; and ensuring diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Bottom line up front:

We are requesting a \$49 million increase in Tribal Extension funding with continuous funding after the initial 4 years of program build up. The \$30 million increase to the FRTEP programs will increase the total number of FRTEP agents: 90 new agents added to the current 35, as well as the addition of 27 new regional specialists with expertise in areas such as water, range, animal science, forestry, youth, Native foods, and Native languages. The regional specialists are needed to engage Tribes not served by either FRTEP agents or 1994 Extension programs. The \$19 million increase for 1994 Extension will enhance and expand their outreach and programming efforts.

ICEC is composed of 17 volunteers with expertise in Native American agriculture, cultural relevance, and extension services delivery. The members and their affiliations are at Exhibit 1.

Summary of ICEC findings:

1. FRTEP is an impactful program limited only by its past and current erratic and uncertain funding.
2. FRTEP started almost 100 years after the County-based Extension programs were established.
3. FRTEP and 1994s funding began at a minimal level.
4. FRTEP’s inadequate funding has not kept up with inflation. The initial requested funding of \$10 million was to serve 239 Tribes, but in 1991 only received \$1.0 million for 15 positions (see appendix table 4). Thirty years later the program has only increased to \$3 million, funding 35 positions serving 32 Tribes. If the original \$10 million had been allocated and increased at the same rate as the \$1 million start-up fund, the program would have had a \$618 million investment instead of the \$72 million over the past 30 years. This equates to a missed investment of \$544 million not accounting for inflation. The lack of growth in the funding and number of agents is the core issue in the ability of FRTEP programs to meet the increased demand for services.

5. Because the bulk of FRTEP and 1994 workers' salaries are supported by the scant federal funds, Tribal Extension programs have difficulty attracting and retaining staff.
6. FRTEP and 1994 programs now reach about 75 of the 574 eligible Federally Recognized Tribes, or approximately 13%. The demand for services from Tribal Nations vastly exceeds the current available resources.
7. The competitive funding is static for FRTEP and the 1994s. As new programs compete and are added, all existing programs in Tribal Nations suffer from further reduced funding. This type of competitive funding is not found in County Extension programs.
8. FRTEP and 1994 programs, despite their erratic and uncertain year-to-year funding, have performed mightily, accomplishing significant and measurable results.

Proposed Solutions: The proposed solutions put forth by ICEC will place these FRTEP and 1994 programs on par with non-Tribal (County) Extension programs and provide an equitable and non-discriminatory path forward. It will be critical that assurances are in place with the Extension directors to keep the flow of funds to the Tribal Extension projects that they support.

- Eliminate the competitive nature of the FRTEP funding and instead use permanent funding similar to County Extension programs. The current 35 FRTEP positions are to be grandfathered in and increased to \$140,000 level per year. The new FRTEP positions are to be allocated based on the formula described on page 9 for all phases.
- Increase funding for both the FRTEP and the 1994 Extension programs to quickly make them equivalent to the non-Tribal Extension programs across the nation. Note that the funding path of each program is separate and should not be seen as a single funding line. Both are critical and need to be supported. The recommended increase in allocations of \$30 million for FRTEP will bring the base number of agents up to a solid foundation of 125. The recommendation of a \$19 million increase in allocation to the 1994s is needed to enhance their outreach and programming efforts. Both increases need to be incorporated into base funding requests starting in year 5 after the initial 4-year \$49M increased funding is expended.
- Increase access to additional programs and reduce or remove the matching requirements on all USDA grants for Tribal Extension.
- Provide flexibility in how program funds can be used in project resources and activities to allow each Tribal agent to meet the continually changing needs of the Tribal communities.





“I think that’s really important that the FRTEP program is creating healthy relationships within our families, within our community. There’s a lot of hardships in the community so it’s really nice to have those happy moments to look forward to.”

Trent Teegerstrom

Associate Director, Tribal Extension Programs
University of Arizona
tteegers@ag.arizona.edu
520-621-6245

Jo Ann Warner

Associate Director
Western Extension Risk Management Center
Spokane, WA
warnerj@wsu.edu
509-477-2168

Cris Stainbrook

President
Indian Land Tenure Foundation
Little Canada, MN
cstainbrook@iltf.org
651-766-8999

www.tribalexension.org

