



To whom it may concern,

I am writing to reaffirm the Intertribal Agriculture Council's (IAC) commitment to fostering economic development and self-sufficiency for Tribal Governments, their citizens, and surrounding rural communities across the nation through agriculture endeavors.

To demonstrate our commitment to this effort, we have scrutinized our contract together, titled **National Native Conservation Network (NR243A750012C007)**, and we believe that this award is aligned with President Trump and Secretary of Agriculture Nominee Brooke Rollin's priorities to support small farmers, strengthen rural communities, and responsibly steward agricultural lands. Specifically, this agreement prioritizes:

- **Strengthening Domestic Conservation and Resource Management:** Our project is fundamentally designed to boost domestic interests by advancing multi-use land stewardship aimed at securing food supplies, optimizing domestic energy utilization, and bolstering self-sufficiency on lands under the jurisdiction of Tribal Governments. These efforts are essential for maintaining national security and economic independence.
- **Enhancing Agricultural Ecosystems through Strategic Partnerships:** By aligning with five key partners, our network ensures a robust and comprehensive outreach across the nation, aiming to improve farmland ecosystems, watersheds, and wildlife habitats while maintaining robust agricultural production. This initiative supports enhanced food and water security, boosts agricultural yields in U.S. farmlands, and promotes robust hunting and agritourism, contributing significantly to local and national economies.
- **Expansive Outreach in Rural America:** Our network proudly serves stakeholders in rural America, emphasizing quality service delivery regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. This approach aligns with the administration's priorities on enhancing rural economic opportunities and inclusive community development.
- **Promoting Responsible Environmental Engagement:** A critical deliverable of our network involves increasing local stakeholder engagement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, focusing on domestic initiatives without funding overseas operations or programs inconsistent with current administrative policies on issues like abortion and discrimination.
- **Adaptive Collaboration:** Recognizing the dynamic nature of administrative priorities, IAC is fully prepared to tailor our project deliverables and scope of work to better align with the evolving objectives of the administration. We propose strategic enhancements to our ongoing projects to further contribute to national goals of economic resilience and robust community empowerment.

To ensure alignment with President Trump's administrative actions over the past month, we conducted an internal review of the language present in our contract agreement. While the

previous administration favored terminology such as "underserved," IAC has previously and consistently communicated that such a term does not adequately or accurately reflect the needs or unique political status of sovereign Tribal governments, who have jurisdiction over 68 million acres of land, and their citizens. We have identified terminology below that requires clarification and context to accurately reflect the scope and reach of IAC's work under this cooperative agreement. Specifically, the bolded terms are overly broad and fall short of addressing the unique complexities and status of Indian Country in relation to the work addressed by this cooperative agreement. Accordingly, we have provided legal definitions that reflect the scope and reach of our work, which are distinguishable from terms that focus on demographics rather than Tribal sovereignty and citizens of Tribal sovereigns:

Historically Underserved: For the purpose of IAC's work under this cooperative agreement, IAC focuses its efforts within Indian Country—a statutory term that is not synonymous with “historically underserved” as contemplated by USDA, but rather geographic regions with Tribal jurisdiction over the lands encompassed by the term. Indian Country is defined by federal statute as: “(a) all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and, including rights-of-way running through the reservation, (b) all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state, and (c) all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same.” 18 U.S.C.A. § 1151. Thus, Indian Country references key geographical locations within the United States and under the jurisdiction of Tribal Nations that are consistently overlooked by standard USDA offerings. Indian Country represents more than 68.5 million acres and 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations in some of the most remote areas of this country, and yet serves as the cornerstones of surrounding rural economies crucial to the efficient distribution of resources and support.

Minority-Serving Institutions: For the purpose of this cooperative agreement, the term Minority-Serving Institutions is overly broad, and with regard to IAC should only be understood to reference Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). TCUs, similar to land-grant institutions for states in which land-grant colleges belong, exist as part of Tribal Nations. Under federal law, “‘tribally controlled college or university’ means an institution of higher education *which is formally controlled, or has been formally sanctioned, or chartered, by the governing body of an Indian tribe or tribes*, except that no more than one such institution shall be recognized with respect to any such tribe.” 25 U.S.C. § 1801(a)(4) (emphasis added). These institutions are educational entities associated with Tribal governments and Indian Country. TCUs often serve extremely remote populations who are not regularly served in education. These institutions play a pivotal role in our partnership, acting as essential conduits for delivering USDA resources effectively and efficiently to Indian Country.

By focusing our efforts on Indian Country—that is, lands governed by Tribal Nations and from which many Tribal citizens operate their agricultural-related businesses and/or interests, this cooperative agreement serves as a critical mechanism for reducing the federal spending burden traditionally required to reach these often highly rural and difficult to access communities. Our targeted approach not only ensures more efficient use of USDA resources but also amplifies the impact of every dollar spent by directly addressing the unique challenges and leveraging the inherent strengths of Indian Country. This strategy not only fosters local self-sufficiency and economic development, but also contributes to a more balanced, multi-use approach to national resource management and community support.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. We look forward to your guidance on how best we can align our initiatives with the evolving priorities.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kari Jo Lawrence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kari Jo Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer
Intertribal Agriculture Council