



**A VISION FOR NATIVE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
INFRASTRUCTURE REBUILDING AND RECOVERY**





The Native American food and agriculture sector is the single most under appreciated resource for sustainable, rural and regional economic development in our Nation.

For too long, Native producers, communities, Tribes, and regions have not had the infrastructure necessary to create a resilient and thriving regional food system. A regional food system grounded in Native culture, that provides economic opportunities and diversification for Tribes and producers to feed their communities is necessary. After COVID-19, it is clear that feeding our people is one of the most essential functions of our society and requires a new solution particularly as we recover and rebuild post COVID-19.

There are substantial missing links in the Tribal food system that create deep gaps in food security that are detrimental to Native people and the communities in which they live. Because Tribal governments and the communities they serve are essential to national rural prosperity, those missing links can be overlooked no longer.

The federal Government spends billions of dollars on USDA nutrition programs to feed Native people as part of their trust responsibility to Tribes. While these programs purport to feed Native people, they do not fully support the nutritional needs of Tribal communities and bypass the very Native farmers and ranchers that produce food within those communities.

The missing link is infrastructure.

Tribal Nations do not have the tax base nor the dedicated capital for building the infrastructure necessary to harness the potential of their food systems. The impacts of a robust food and agriculture sector would create jobs in rural Tribal communities, feed Native people more nutritious food and allow the federal government to spend less money on nutrition programs in the long term. Regional food and agriculture infrastructure in Indian Country would create new opportunities that would strengthen food system resilience, support healthier and more nutritious foods, provide enhanced food security and create more jobs.

The Regional Hub Model

We propose building 10 regional food hubs in Indian Country to provide necessary processing and distribution infrastructure for food grown and raised by Tribal farmers and ranchers. These hubs could also serve as critical resources to the broader rural communities.

Regional Hubs will feature:

- Meat processing facilities
- Fruits, vegetables, and grains processing facilities
- Processing facilities for poultry, egg, and dairy
- Warehouse and storage for perishables and shelf stable products
- Logistics and distribution infrastructure to support regional food economies to allow food to reach the people who need it
- Technology and data infrastructure to support regional food economies
- Finance and Credit services for Native Producers

The discussion that follows also provides a glimpse of the various related services and programming that are equally essential to a thriving regional food model. This necessary infrastructure will uphold the federal government's trust and treaty responsibility to feed Native people. These regional hubs will be supported by sub-hubs in Tribal communities that will serve not only as distribution channels for prospective entrepreneurs and serve as the support for community food access. These initial 10 regional food hubs will begin the process of creating a cooperative model that would enhance multiple goals and could be augmented over time.

The time for change is now.

Many voices are now calling for fundamental changes within our nation's food systems. Native people have known for many decades that such change is overdue. The promise that can be realized by reimagining Native food systems is within our grasp. People throughout rural areas of this nation know that change is needed. It is time to provide an infrastructure roadmap for the future of Native agriculture. Our collective vision as we recover and rebuild from COVID-19 must ensure that no region of Indian Country is left behind in achieving food systems improvement, coordination and growth. This is a bold plan that will build strong rural economies and strengthen food systems so that during the most challenging times, Indian Country can feed itself.

We hope you join us in fulfilling this vision.

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The Regional Hub Model

What is a regional food trade hub?

A regional food trade hub will serve as a central point for the aggregation of food produced in a specific region. The food hubs will house a warehouse for food storage, provide processing for meat, eggs, dairy and other products and will be the central point for distributing food to Tribal communities.

Why Regionalize the Native Food System?

Regionalization of food infrastructure in Indian Country will leverage the individual food and agriculture strengths of Tribal communities while also providing stability for Tribal producers to market their goods in Tribal communities. Regional Food Trade Hubs should be built within logical zone locations centered around Native regional land bases and the Tribal governments and communities in that region. These hub zones can support the aggregating and processing, distributing, and marketing of food and agriculture occurring within that region to centralize support and coordination. Regional food hubs also can spur sub hubs creating greater interconnectivity between more localized food production between different producers within each region.

We identified the following initial regions based on mapping of resources, supply chain needs of the region, and the number of Tribes in the region.

- Oklahoma
 - Mountain
 - Southeast
 - Northeast
 - Midwest
- Upper Great Plains
 - Alaska
 - Pacific Northwest
 - West
 - Southwest

Processing

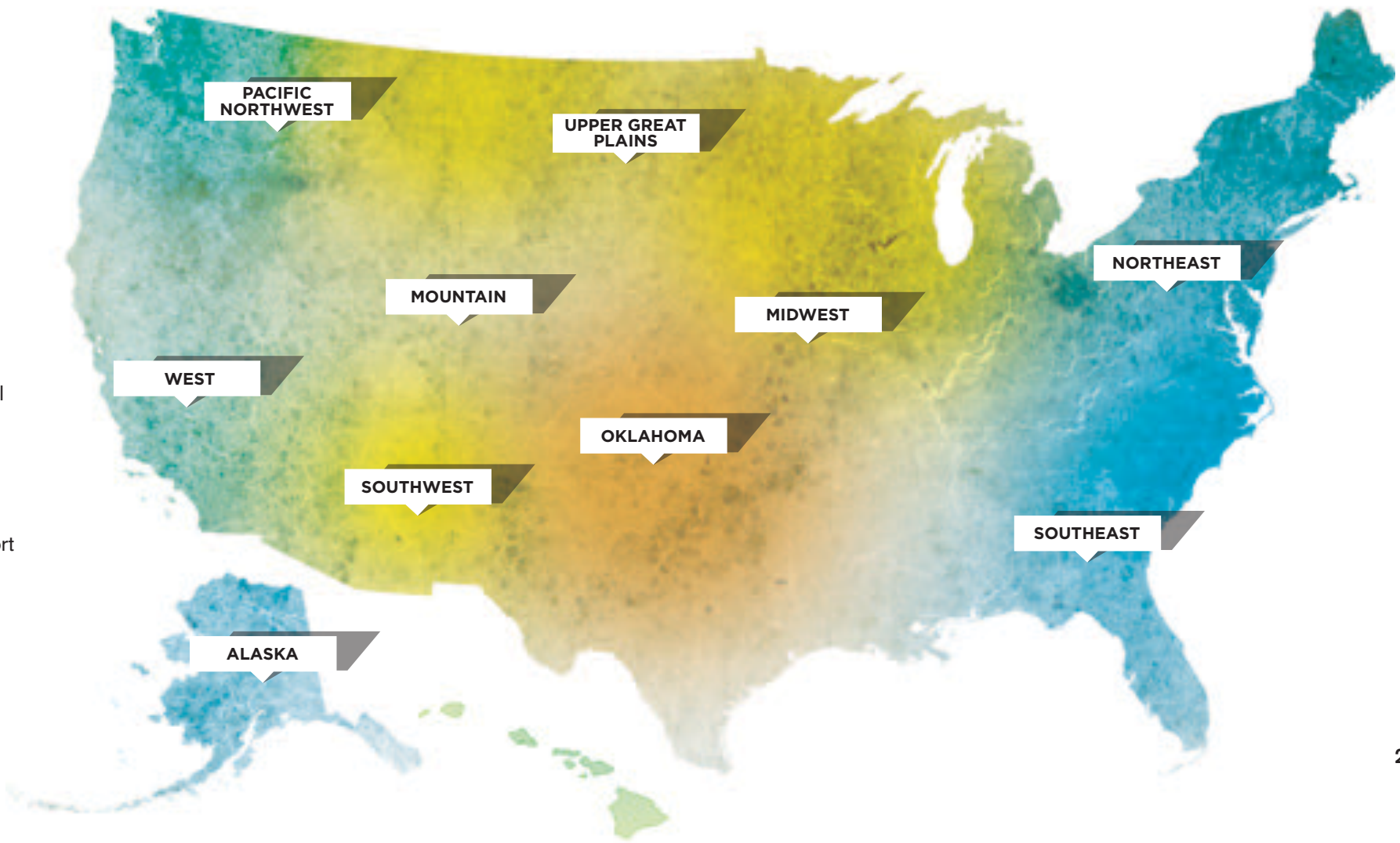
The Regional Hubs will provide critical middle supply chain infrastructure for processing raw agricultural goods grown by Native producers. Processing facilities located at the hubs will include: meat processing plant, grain milling, fruits, vegetables, poultry, egg and dairy.

Storage

Proper storage infrastructure is necessary for capturing the value of food produced in Indian Country. Storage at the regional hubs will include: warehouse storage for dry goods, cold storage for perishable goods and grain storage.

Logistics and Distribution

The Regional Food Hub Model will allow for timely delivery and distribution of food from the Regional Hubs directly to Tribal communities. Regional hubs can also distribute food between hubs to meet the demand on a national Tribal level. This will include: trucking, purchasing, food waste diversion while utilizing block chain technology to ensure efficiency.



Special Programming

Each hub will have specific programming to achieve the food systems goals of the region. These programs include: Gen-A promoting youth in agriculture, Financial Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship, Native Chefs, Co-Ops, E-Commerce, and Data Sovereignty.

The Role of Traditional Foods in the Hubs

Traditional foods will be present in every aspect of the regional hubs. Infrastructure needed to support traditional foods is already accounted for in the costs for each Regional Hub. The Regional Hubs will support traditional foods through:

- Multispecies meat processing that will allow harvesters and traditional hunters to access certified facilities.
- Milling operations that will allow traditional grains to be milled and distributed to communities and into retail operations.
- Cold storage that will allow traditional fruits and vegetables to be stored without the threat of spoilage.
- Purchasing and distribution of traditional foods from harvesters.

The Economic Impacts of Regional Hubs

Native Agriculture Captures More of the Food Dollar

Food and agriculture are major economic drivers in Indian Country. According to the latest USDA Census of Agriculture, Native farmers and ranchers sold \$3.54 billion worth of farm and ranch products – agricultural goods such as cattle, poultry, and grains – in 2017. While that farm production figure is substantial, it only accounts for 7.8% of the food’s total value (e.g. how much a consumer would pay for a frozen hamburger patty, refrigerated grilled chicken breast or specialty loaf of bread). The remainder of the “food dollar” goes to subsectors like food processing, trade, and food services.

These necessary steps for transforming farm and ranch products into food are often not captured by Native owned and led enterprises, limiting agricultural economic development. With \$3.54 billion in farm production sales, it is reasonable to expect a Native value-added agriculture sector worth \$45.4 billion. Reclaiming only a portion of that total amount, say 73%, would allow Native agriculture to surpass the entire Indian gaming industry (\$33 billion).

Value Captured by the Hubs

Tribes, Tribal enterprises, and Native entrepreneurs are optimally positioned to move beyond growing crops and raising livestock into the business of putting food in stores and on tables. The Regional Food Hub Model allows Native communities to add more value to their farm and ranch products before sending them into the wholesale and retail markets. The Regional Food Hubs would encapsulate food processing, packaging, and transportation, moving the needle from 7.8% of the food dollar to 28.6% of the pie.

Our estimates below do not include the largest sector represented on the food dollar, food services (36.7%, \$16.5 billion potential in Indian Country). While the Hubs would not directly capture the value of the food services industry, they would lay the groundwork for Native Farm to Table efforts through restaurants or within Tribal casinos and could begin to capture the value of the \$16.65 billion potential. Some experts in Native Agriculture believe this could approach over \$25 billion.

Processing

The Regional Food Hub Model builds food processing infrastructure in Indian Country to add value to food grown by Native producers. This investment includes processing for: meat, specialty crops, grain milling, fruits, vegetables, fisheries, poultry, eggs, dairy, and community processing of traditional foods.

% OF FOOD DOLLAR
15%
INVESTMENT
\$350 million
POTENTIAL RETURN
\$6.8 billion

Packaging

Packaging equipment at the Regional Food Hubs will ensure food can be transported safely while meeting the needs of its end consumer, both for wholesale and retail markets.

% OF FOOD DOLLAR
2.3%
INVESTMENT
\$10 million
POTENTIAL RETURN
\$1 billion

Transportation

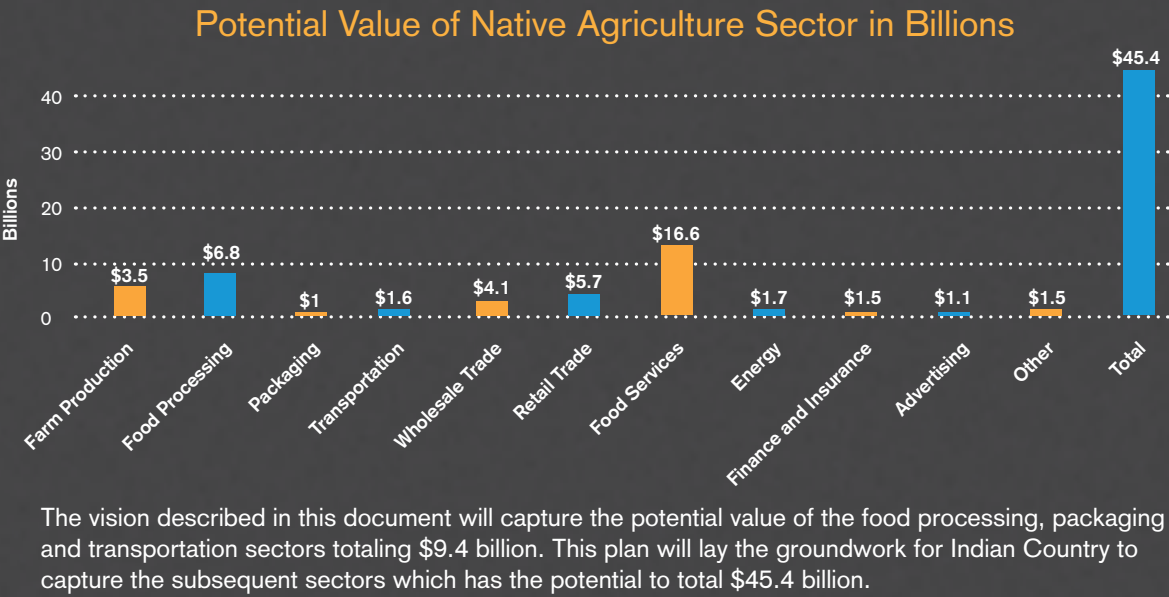
The next major step in the Regional Food Hub Model is to transport and distribute the food that is processed at the hubs to Tribal communities. Transportation and distribution require investments in: trucking, logistics, staffing for distribution, and distribution within the communities themselves.

% OF FOOD DOLLAR
3.5%
INVESTMENT
\$168 million
POTENTIAL RETURN
\$1.6 billion

% OF FOOD DOLLAR	INVESTMENT	POTENTIAL RETURN
20.8%	\$528 million	\$9.4 billion



USDA Food Dollar



The vision described in this document will capture the potential value of the food processing, packaging and transportation sectors totaling \$9.4 billion. This plan will lay the groundwork for Indian Country to capture the subsequent sectors which has the potential to total \$45.4 billion.

Hub Brick and Mortar Costs



Meat Processing

70% of Tribal producers raise cattle. Investing in meat processing is the most critical aspect for advancing Native American agriculture.

- The Regional Hub Meat Processing Center will be:
- Federally inspected to ensure the highest food safety protocols
 - Process multiple species like bison, elk, sheep, and pork



Fruits, Vegetables, Specialty Crops and Grain

The Regional Hubs will purchase, aggregate, package and distribute fruits and vegetables to Tribal communities in rural and remote areas. Grains like corn, wheat and soybeans also require proper storage and processing. In addition, milling infrastructure will be located at the hubs to ensure grain producers have access to critical infrastructure.

- The Regional Hub Fruit, Vegetables, Specialty Crops and Grain Infrastructure will include:
- Grain elevators, milling equipment and packaging equipment
 - Wash and Pack facilities for fruits and vegetables
 - Packaging equipment and supplies



Fisheries

Fishing is a way of life for many Tribes located near bodies of water. Fish processing infrastructure is a critical link in ensuring that Tribal communities who practice agriculture through fishing are supported. The funding would be distributed to the region to address its specific fishing needs.

- Regional Fisheries Infrastructure will include:
- Refrigerated storage
 - Filleting stations and ozone
 - Shellfish storage



Poultry, Eggs and Dairy

Each regional hub should also include a poultry, egg, and dairy processing facility. Each facility should be federally inspected for poultry slaughter as well as provide further processing for dairy and eggs.

- Regional Poultry, Eggs and Dairy Infrastructure will include:
- Poultry slaughter facilities
 - Cold storage



Warehouse and Storage

Each regional hub would need proper warehouse capacity that is appropriate for the needs of that region. This storage must include cold storage as well as shelf-stable storage.

- Warehouse Storage infrastructure will:
- Serve as the main storage for the distribution of all food to regional communities
 - Include cold storage for perishable goods and ample shelf stable storage



Food Waste Diversion

Reducing food waste not only increases efficiency but also addresses food insecurity while eliminating wasteful spending. Food waste diversion streams at the hubs will ensure food is prioritized appropriately for distribution for human consumption first, then for animal consumption and then lastly for composting. This will drawdown greenhouse gas emissions while also ensuring people are fed.

- Food Waste Diversion Infrastructure will:
- Require advanced logistics to track food freshness for human consumption
 - Reduce producer costs by providing animal feed
 - Create a composting program to divert waste from landfills



Packaging

Each Regional Food Hub should be equipped with packaging equipment to ensure that all food that passes through the regional food hub can be packed to ensure it safely arrives at its final destination. Packaging equipment would be able to serve the unique needs of that region. Smart packaging will allow producers and the Hubs to reduce waste and provide solutions for both wholesale and retail markets.



Logistics Infrastructure

The hubs cannot run smoothly without the proper logistical infrastructure to support them. This one-time initial expense will build a logistical infrastructure for all hubs to use. Hubs will not only communicate with sub hubs in their region but will also communicate with Hubs across the country to distribute food most efficiently.

- Logistics Infrastructure will:
- Utilize Blockchain technology to ensure all food is accounted for and distributed appropriately
 - Direct Trucking and Distribution efforts
 - Address food security issues by providing food when and where it is most needed
 - Work directly with producers on timing harvests and deliveries
 - Limit food waste by ensuring that food is delivered before it has expired



Trucking

The Regional Hub Model requires distribution from the larger regional hubs to the smaller, more localized sub hubs. Each Tribe within the 10 regions will need a small fleet of trucking vehicles that can facilitate distribution and coordination of food movement within sub hub locations and to the regional hub, for the delivery of foods both from the community to the regional food trade hub and within smaller Tribal community clusters.



Ancillary Costs

The Regional Hubs will constitute large campuses housing multiple food processing, distribution, and packaging efforts.

- Ancillary Infrastructure includes:
- Roads, sidewalks
 - Loading docks
 - Staffing rooms and restrooms

Total Brick and Mortar for Regional Hub

Cost Per Hub	Total Cost
\$38,500,000	\$388,000,000



Operations

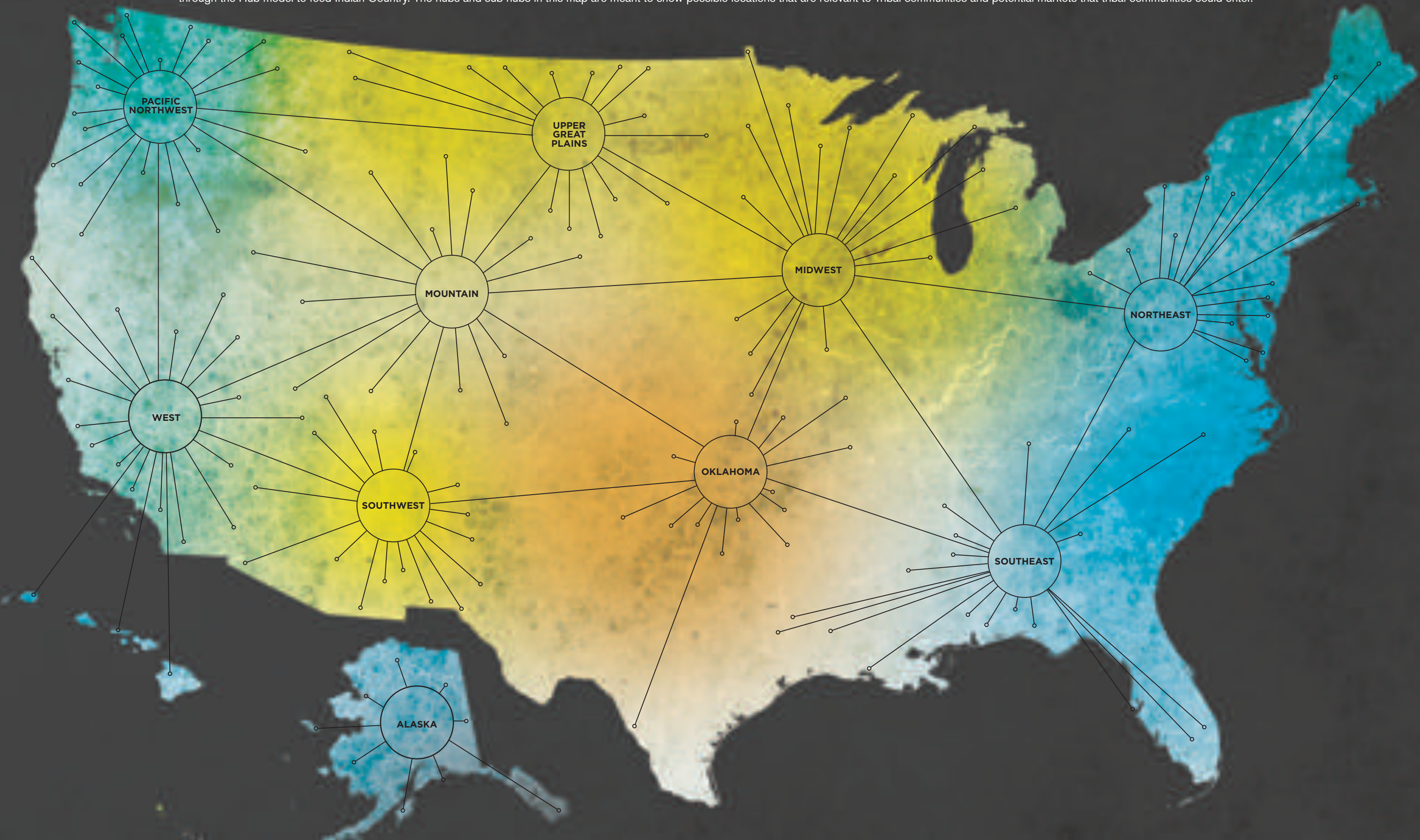
	Cost Per Hub/Year	Total Cost for 10 years
 Staffing The labor necessary to staff each of the 10 locations should cover all salaries for individuals working in the Regional Hubs.	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
 Maintenance Maintenance for heavy equipment, trucks, food processing infrastructure is necessary to keep the hubs running smoothly.	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
 Food Safety Each regional location will be responsible for food safety capacity building and will work to coordinate producer training, food handler training, technical assistance and coordination with all Tribal governments and all Native food producers and processors in the region. The National Center for Native Food Safety Training must be expanded to provide food safety capacity building and training.	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
 Distribution Ongoing distribution between Regional Hubs, sub hubs and Tribal communities is the main goal of this vision. This requires staffing for trucking, gas, and other distribution expenses.	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
	1 Year of Operations Per Hub	1 Year of Operations for all Hubs
	\$4,000,000	\$40,000,000
	Total Operations Cost for all 10 hubs for 10 years	
	\$400,000,000	

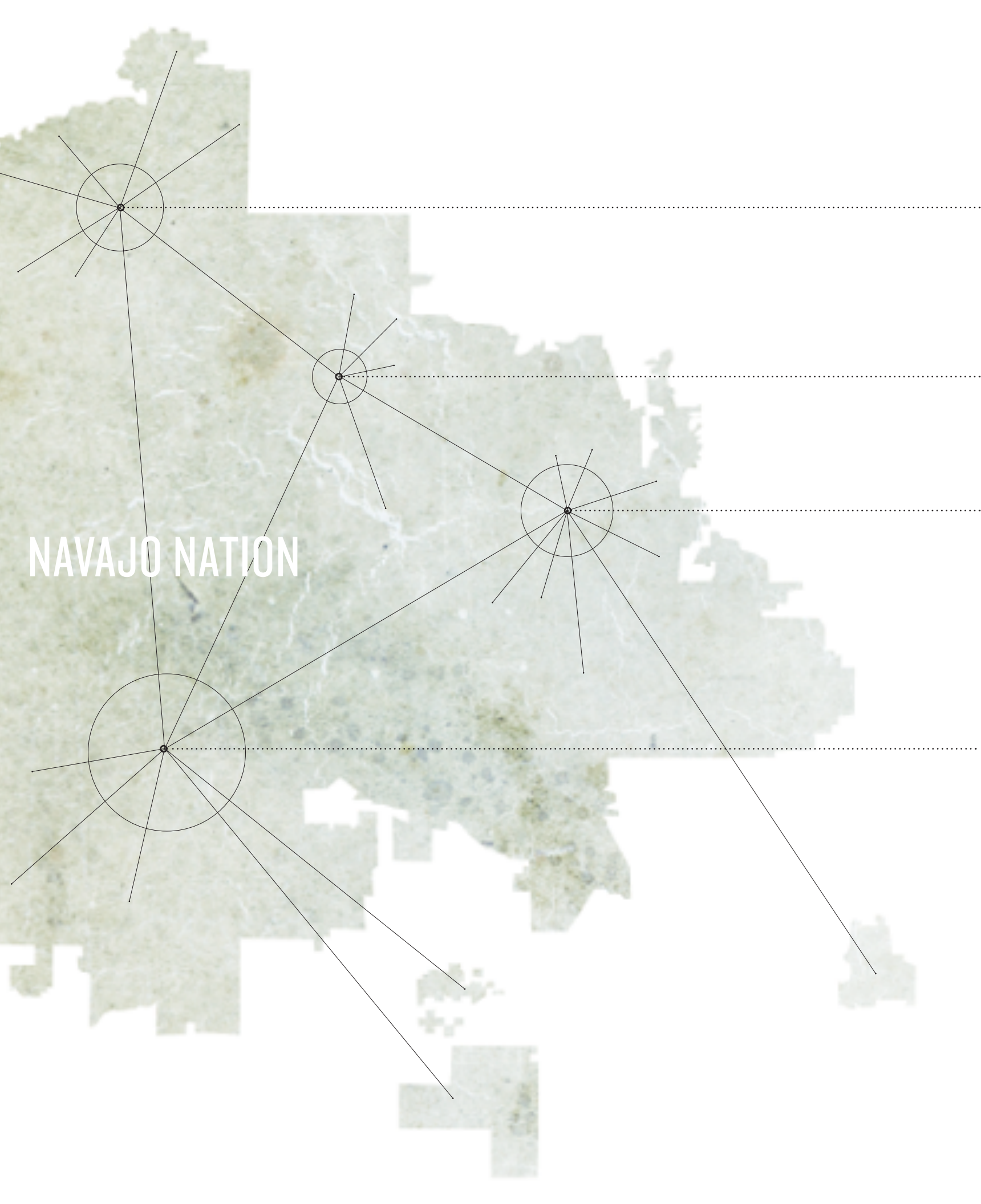


NATIVE PEOPLE ARE AT THE CENTER OF OPERATIONS. THROUGHOUT INDIAN COUNTRY, WE ARE RECLAIMING, REVITALIZING AND REMEMBERING OUR FOOD SYSTEMS. AS WE REIMAGINE NATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS, WE EMBRACE MULTIPLE APPROACHES: SOME ACTION AT THE COMMUNITY-LEVEL AND OTHERS DEDICATED TO INTERTRIBAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS. REIMAGINING NEEDS TO OCCUR AT ALL LEVELS. WE BELIEVE IN AND SUPPORT EACH EFFORT, NO MATTER HOW SMALL OR LARGE, TO SUPPORT NATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS.

About the Sub Hub

Individual Tribal governments and Native communities have a web of important assets that center their communities. Regional food hubs will coordinate with local communities through Sub Hubs. This will ensure that food and agricultural products begin to move through the Hub model to feed Indian Country. The hubs and sub hubs in this map are meant to show possible locations that are relevant to Tribal communities and potential markets that tribal communities could enter.





Investments in Sub Hubs

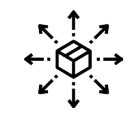


Community Gardens for Every Federally Recognized Tribe **\$10,000,000**
Community gardens serve as both food production centers and as community teaching institutions. For only a \$10 million appropriation, the Federal Government could build 2 Community Gardens at all 574 Federally Recognized Tribes. This simple, yet significant investment would build food security in Indian Country while also providing a space for the community to learn about the importance of growing local food.



Sub Hub Asset Mapping **\$5,000,000**
Tribal governments, their entities and the USDA all have existing infrastructure in Indian Country that can support the Regional Hub Vision. While the regional hub infrastructure is being constructed, asset mapping of existing food production, processing and storage assets must be done simultaneously to leverage existing Native-controlled resources within each region. Both physical assets (commercial kitchens or Tribal owned processing infrastructure) and human resources (like labor and training needs) should be mapped in this process.

All regions across Indian Country possess different strengths. Strengths and current assets need to be mapped, analyzed, and then leveraged to ensure that gaps are being filled while also efficiently providing resources where they are needed the most. Deciding where sub hubs are positioned and what those sub hubs' roles are within this unified and coordinated system will only strengthen local assets across Indian Country.



	Annual Cost per Region	Total Cost for 10 Years
Sub Hub Distribution Infrastructure	\$1,000,000	\$100,000,000
Each Tribal government within the food hubs should have at least one warehouse with cold storage capacity located within their Tribal jurisdictional boundaries that will serve as a sub hub coordinating mechanism. This Tribal-level hub warehouse would receive food from the respective regional food hub and distribute foods within their local communities within the individual Tribe's jurisdiction. Sub hub warehouses can be shared among groups of Tribes as needed and as appropriate.		



	Annual Cost per Region	Total Cost for 10 Years
Community Food Processing Infrastructure	\$1,000,000	\$100,000,000
Each Tribe needs access to resources at the sub hub level to build community-accessible micro-food processing and commercial kitchens that will help further coordinate local food production and distribution and build localized processing infrastructure capacity for local foods thus spawning the next generation of food entrepreneurs. Community-level processing centers can also serve the dual function as Native food entrepreneurship incubator, utilized by individuals creating value added food products. Community Food Processing Infrastructure should also be tailored to the processing of traditional foods for that sub hub area. These facilities must have proper equipment for canning, packaging, food product development and preservation.		



	Annual Cost per Region	Total Cost for 10 Years
Sub Hub Operations and Maintenance	\$500,000	\$50,000,000
Additionally, each Tribe should identify at least 2-3 full time employees who will manage sub hub warehouse locations. Staffing allocations could be shared among sub hub locations; Tribal governments can supply some or all sub-hub staffing needs; public-private partnerships and utilization of job development programs would also supplement this sub hub staffing allocation.		



	Nationwide Per Year	Nationwide Cost for 10 years
Traditional Foods	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
Programming for Traditional Foods should occur at the sub hub level to account for the variety of traditional foods across regions. This set aside for traditional foods would provide individual Tribes the opportunity to engage their community to utilize the infrastructure built at the sub hubs for foods traditionally grown by their people.		



Financial Infrastructure

Capital Access for Native Producers

Indian Country needs the financial infrastructure to bring Native Agriculture into its next chapter. Access to capital is the most pressing issue for Native Farmers and Ranchers and the success of the regional food hub model is contingent on a lending structure that works for Indian Country’s food system. This financial infrastructure will ensure that Native Producers have the capital necessary to run their operations so they can produce for the hubs.

THE CURRENT AGRICULTURAL LENDING STRUCTURES ARE NOT ADEQUATELY SERVING THE NEEDS OF NATIVE FARMERS AND RANCHERS.

The solution to this problem is to utilize a combination of funding sources—public, private, and philanthropic—that creates a sustainable investment, or a “patient capital” approach. This would preserve the potential for growth within individual agriculture operations and the agriculture hub infrastructure. In addition, this must be coupled with an approach for wraparound technical support and Inter-Tribal cooperative approaches to management that will ground the agriculture businesses with a safety net that will preserve the opportunity for sustained growth.



Federal Funding

Capital access needs for agriculture producers, food businesses and food systems are not meeting today’s challenges. Financing food systems in Indian Country with federal support will require capital access resources through a combination of Department of Treasury capital to Native CDFI’s, USDA lending authorities, Department of Commerce lending authorities as well as guaranteed lending authorities provided by a variety of federal departments. The current lending programs at Farm Service Agency (USDA) and Rural Development (USDA) are inadequate to meet the current demand and are antiquated in their approach to lending.

	Investment per Year	10 Year Total Investment
Federal Funding	\$150,000,000	\$1,500,000,000
USDA	\$50,000,000	\$500,000,000
Treasury	\$50,000,000	\$500,000,000
Commerce	\$50,000,000	\$500,000,000
Total	\$150,000,000	\$1,500,000,000



Farm Credit System

The federal government must also provide additional support through the Farm Credit System lending institutions for specialized capital access capacity within this specialized agriculture and rural infrastructure lender. An additional infusion of \$10 million annually into the Farm Credit System (FCS) will allow the capitalization of a Native Agriculture Farm Credit System specialized lending entity. The Farm Credit System, the nation’s premier specialized agriculture and rural infrastructure lending source, is essential to the support of Indian Country’s food and agriculture infrastructure vision.



Risk Management Agency

The federal government must provide for a one-time capitalization of at least one self-insurance risk pool to provide for the necessary agriculture business insurance and crop insurance products tailored to Native agriculture and food systems. In addition, the crop insurance industry and the federal Risk Management Agency must work alongside NAAF to encourage the identification of key crop insurance providers to Native food systems.



Farm Service Agency

Because of the unique needs of Native farmers and ranchers for capital access programs for ownership and operation of farms and ranches, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at USDA needs authorization to develop a unique sustainable capital access program for use by Native producers who are farming or ranching on trust lands.

THROUGH A NEWLY AUTHORIZED SET-ASIDE OF 20% FOR NATIVE FARMERS AND RANCHERS, FSA WOULD BE ABLE TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF INDIAN COUNTRY.



Generation Indigenous Agriculture (Gen-A)

Investing in the Next Generation

The opportunities for next generation agriculturalists in Indian Country (“Gen-A”) Native youth and young adult leader engagement are an integral part of the structure of regional Native food hubs. Native youth need exposure to all facets of food and agriculture including business, policy, and health as well as an understanding of all stages within the food supply chain.

Traditional employment opportunities, in addition to internships, mentorships and apprenticeships are important functions of youth involvement in the Regional Food Hubs. Partnerships with local and regional trade and technical schools, community colleges, Tribal colleges and universities, and graduate institutions of higher learning will offer a wide variety of practical skills training activities. Preparing the next generation of agriculturalists for success is critically important and should be coordinated with each regional food hub with a variety of partners appropriate to that region.



Capital Access for Native New and Beginning Farmers

Nationwide Cost per Year Nationwide Cost for 10 years

\$10,000,000 \$100,000,000

To encourage and support interest in Native food entrepreneurship among Native youth and young adults (Gen-A) specialized opportunities will be needed to further support their growing interests in participating in food and agriculture enterprises and food entrepreneurship activities. Coordination will occur between and among Native CDFIs, Native banks and others providing specialized agriculture capital access to build and deploy specialized loan products designed to support Gen-A entrepreneurs. All federal departments will deploy initiatives to support Gen-A Native food entrepreneurs using existing program authorities.



Agriculture Resource Management Scholarships

\$10,000,000 \$100,000,000

Fully funding the scholarship program established in 1993 through the American Indian Agriculture Resource Management Act (AIARMA) would greatly improve Native students' exposure to agriculture. This scholarship program has never received appropriations, while being authorized for over 25 years. Full funding is needed to create the pipeline of Native talent to manage the visualized food and agriculture infrastructure.



Youth Traditional Food Programming

\$3,000,000 \$30,000,000

Food Traditions must be passed down to the next generation. Engaging youth in harvesting, gathering, fishing, and processing traditions through Tribal programs will ensure that not only these lessons are passed down but that Native youth but also build important skills and healthy lifestyles.



Emerging Entrepreneurs

\$5,000,000 \$50,000,000

Supporting beginning entrepreneurs (2-4 years of experience) and developing professionals (5+ years of experience) early in their careers is the difference between success and failure. These emerging food entrepreneurs need mentorship and professional development programs delivered in a coordinated Inter-Tribal approach to build skills in:

- Agricultural production
- Agricultural business and economics
- Agricultural law and policy
- Agricultural sciences
- Data and analytics



Career Experience

No new funding needed

Through these regional food hubs there will be ample opportunities for Native youth to move up their career, ample opportunities both within USDA, Nonprofits, business and in agricultural production are necessary to build resumes.

- Creation of specific Native Pathways Program through USDA
- Indian Preference for USDA positions
- Regional Hub Internship Program
- Mentoring and job shadowing



Commerce and Entrepreneurship Infrastructure

Supporting Native Business

Supporting individual Native food entrepreneurship is vital for the success of the larger Native food system. Not only do Native entrepreneurs need support in critical areas such as business management, marketing techniques, risk management, and food safety, they need access to financing and the facilities to support their individual food entrepreneurship efforts. Food entrepreneurs need greater access to lucrative federal government contracts, such as the over \$1.1 billion spent annually by civilian agencies on food products.

Some of the critical efforts to support food entrepreneurs are:

- Small business loans for Native food entrepreneurs
- Federal coordination of Native food entrepreneurship
- Expansion of federal contracting authorities for food products
- Expansion of 8(a) determination for Native food businesses and entrepreneurs
- Enhancement of opportunities for value added food product development
- Preferences (“Buy Indian”) for Native food product purchasing within all federal departments and agencies

No new appropriations would be needed to support Native food entrepreneurs. We recommend that all federal contracting and purchasing authorities be examined and that up to 20% set aside within program purchasing should be allocated to Native-owned entities supported by regional hubs.



Promoting Native Chefs

A culinary renaissance is happening in Indian Country as Native chefs collaborate on initiatives that are revitalizing culinary food traditions while simultaneously creating market demand for Native-produced foods, specifically ancestral or traditional foods. Native chefs require a separate avenue to support their work. They need to be fully incorporated into the day-to-day functioning of Native food hubs and their voices incorporated throughout the design and delivery of all aspects of food hubs. Because their role is so important to the path ahead, a special fund will be created to further the engagement with and work of Native chefs, not only as social entrepreneurs centered on food and culture, but as important voices in food systems design.



Agriculture Cooperatives

Each regional food hub will receive support annually for a period of ten years to build and support a coordinated effort to create and support agriculture cooperatives. Agriculture cooperatives, either as service, marketing or purchasing cooperatives, are an important business model for community coordination that should be found within each Regional Hub. Coordinated support and development activities within and among the regions will be centrally managed and supported and Tribes will receive support to launch and build food and agriculture cooperative business entities.



E-Commerce Program

To adjust to the changing digital economy, all Regional Food Trade Hubs will be supported by an e-commerce food program that will provide digital supported commerce between each regional food hub and sub-hub location to bridge regions and assist all producers within the regions in an inter-linked communication and food trading platform specifically designed for Tribal communities and producers.



Data Sovereignty

To manage information, supply and demand, all regional food hubs will be supported by a common data platform. Data must be gathered at the producer level, not only for production and economic analysis purposes but also for environmental protection and climate adaptation purposes. The Regional Hub will analyze this data and could leverage existing equipment, climate adaptation and production resources to assist individual producers and improve communities and their related food systems.

Nationwide Cost per Year Nationwide Cost for 10 years

\$1,000,000 **\$10,000,000**

\$2,000,000 **\$20,000,000**

\$1,000,000 **\$10,000,000**

	Start Up Cost	Annual Support for 10 Years	Nationwide Cost for 10 years + Start Up Cost
	\$1,000,000	\$250,000	\$3,500,000



Conservation and Climate

Protecting the Future of our Planet

Indian Lands and the Native people who work them are critical for US success in fighting climate change. Any Climate response must include Tribes, Tribal Communities and Native producers not only as valued partners but as sovereign governments and large landowners. Native conservation and agricultural practices are already leading climate smart practices. Federal law and programs should recognize the inherent value of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).

With over 59 million acres of Native operated farms across the United States, Tribal Nations and Tribal producers will play a critical role in addressing climate change.

	Nationwide Cost per Year	Nationwide Cost for 10 years
 Funding for Resource Management Plans	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
American Indian Agriculture Resource Management Plans are a critical tool for Tribal Sovereignty over natural resources and agricultural lands. While these plans were authorized in 1993, Congress has never fully funded them, leaving Indian Country not having realized their potential. Funding would allow Native producers and Tribes to manage their lands in accordance with cultural practices and to ensure healthy working lands for generations to come.		
 NRCS Implementation of Alternative Funding Arrangements	\$250,000	\$2,500,000
Tribal producers primarily utilize two NRCS programs- the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) allows Tribes to utilize these programs based on their own management criteria. However, NRCS does not adequately provide outreach to Tribal communities on these opportunities and USDA does not enforce this collaboration with Tribal governments and therefor Native producers. USDA should prioritize and enforce NRSC outreach to Tribal producers on utilizing AFAs for EQIP and CSP. USDA should prioritize and enforce implementation by NRCS who utilize AFAs for delivery of NRCS programs.		
 Regenerative Grazing	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
Regenerative grazing practices can improve soil health, improve farm incomes, and provide resilience for flooding. USDA should create a new Tribal Grazing program that provides direct technical assistance for Tribal producers wanting to implement regenerative grazing practices.		
 Prioritize Carbon Sequestration	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
Agricultural lands including timber lands, grasslands have substantial potential for sequestering carbon, one of the leading gases contributing to climate change. According to the UN FAO, 20% of the world's soil carbon stock is found in grasslands. Over 30,000 Native producers are located in the Great Plains and Southern Plains regions of the US (MT, ND, SD, NE, KS, OK, TX, MN, IA, MO, AR) making them critical players in the sequestration of carbon in soils of agricultural lands. Similarly, Indian forests and woodlands comprise 18.6 million acres, one third of all Tribal lands, providing critical habitat for carbon sequestration in timber. NRCS and the Forest Service should create Tribal carbon sequestration programs that assist Tribes and Tribal producers in sequestering carbon on their lands.		

“NATIVE AGRICULTURE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE. NATIVE AGRICULTURE MUST BE FULLY INCLUDED AND SUPPORTED IN ALL EFFORTS TO ENSURE AGRICULTURE IS THE LEADER IN RESPONSES TO CLIMATE IMPACTS.”

Research and TCU Extension

Building and Supporting Native Agricultural Knowledge

The current federal research and extension services do not adequately meet the needs of Native students, producers, and people. For too long, Native producers and Native students have had to overcome significant barriers to access education and extension activities. To ensure that critical extension services reach producers served by the regional food hubs, all hubs must receive agricultural education and extension services through a combination of Tribal College and University extension staff and faculty as well as 1862 or 1890 land grant extension staff and faculty. Native people have been counted by but not served by the land grant formula funds system. The formula fund calculations do not account for unserved Native people nor the lack of enforcement from USDA of their agencies to serve them. In addition, Tribal colleges and universities that receive federal formula funds receive significantly lower levels of support than their counterparts. This systemic denial of services must end.

Native agriculture already covers over 56 million acres of land and Native agriculturalists are embedded in the national agriculture sector. USDA must require that those receiving federal funding meet the obligations to provide services to all those they are required to support, including Indian Country.

	Within the Regional Food Hubs	Nationwide Cost per Year	Nationwide Cost for 10 years
	Tribal Agriculture Research Stations Tribal Nations require agriculture research station facilities to conduct research on food sources, food products, procurement techniques and practices, natural habitats, natural resources, and bio-ecological patterns that can sustain thriving food ecosystems. Regional agriculture research stations will be housed at the Regional Food Hubs and could monitor multiple sub-hub agriculture research activities that will coordinate their work within each region. Research stations will support specialized knowledge development and the support of a new cohort of Native and non-Native researchers.	\$4,000,000	\$40,000,000
	Key Support Outside the Hubs		
	Native Agriculture Research Consortium The Foundation for Agriculture Research (FFAR) must partner with the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) to develop a consortium for comprehensive applied research in Native food systems and agriculture. Participants in a Native Agriculture Research Consortium will then be able to collectively engage multiple areas of contemporary agriculture research driven by common concerns. These agriculture-related research areas central to the importance of Native food systems are equally important to the sustained viability of all agriculture. Suggested topical areas include soil health and conservation; water conservation; food safety; emerging animal and plant health and diseases; human health and nutrition; Indian land tenure; Federal Indian law and policy. In addition to key applied research programming, a bridge program that will ensure the next generation of Native agriculture scientists is needed.	\$4,000,000	\$40,000,000
	Tribal College Agriculture Support	One Time Investment	\$50,000,000
	Tribal colleges and universities have never received adequate funding to support the building of their agriculture research and extension programming. Additional funds are needed to augment programming and develop new programming areas to be disbursed periodically to Tribal colleges and universities to support their agriculture development programming activities.		

Key Partners

	Cost per year	Cost for 10 years
Technical Assistance Support for Producers Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) All regional food trade hubs and their agriculture producers are supported through a national Inter-Tribal technical assistance specialist system housed within the Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council organization (IAC). IAC already has this system in place through an agreement with USDA and the system must be embedded and institutionalized within the funding authorities of USDA as a long-term commitment of USDA to Native agriculture production.	\$4,000,000	\$40,000,000
Law and Policy Support Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) All Regional Food Hubs and the Native agriculture producers, food businesses and Tribal governments within their regions will be supported in their legal and policy analysis needs by the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI), which is a public interest law organization working solely at the intersection of Native food and agriculture law and Indian law.	\$2,000,000	\$20,000,000
Food Sovereignty Assessments First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) Food sovereignty assessments are a critical component of community asset and needs mapping within Native communities. FNDI developed the tool for such assessments over a decade ago and this important tool needs to be implemented at every Regional Food Hub but also throughout all sub-hubs within regions.	\$3,000,000	\$30,000,000
21st Century Native Agricultural Extension Services/FRTEP Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) The FRTEP program that provides agriculture extension support services within the 1862 land grant system has never received adequate funding. Additional funds are necessary to augment and stabilize the agriculture extension endowment funds that have been developed at ILTF to support extension services for Native people.	\$4,000,000	\$40,000,000

Policy Recommendations

US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Solutions to Uplift Native Agriculture

USDA Set Aside	No new funding needed
To ensure that meaningful progress is made in Tribal communities, a set aside of at least 20% in funding support for Tribal organizations, Tribal governments, Native nonprofits, and Native producers should be made in each of USDA's existing program authorities. This commitment is not unusual; it has been provided in the past to other types of producers. The set-aside effort would provide grants, loans and combinations of grants and loans to support investments in farming, ranching and value-added food production.	

Direct Access to USDA Programs	No new funding needed
It is critical to ensure that Tribes, through their government-to-government relationship with the federal government and USDA, have full access to USDA programs without obstruction from states or other entities. For example, the SNAP-Ed grant program should be amended to allow direct funding access by Tribal governments without working through the states. Other programs, such as the TEFAP emergency food access program, do not allow Tribal governments or Tribal entities to directly access emergency food sources, requiring them to instead work through states or other nonprofit organizations to access needed program support.	

USDA Office of Tribal Relations	No new funding needed
All financial resources and federal authorities created or required to support this vision should be supported by USDA through centralized support offered by the USDA Office of Tribal Relations. However, in order to more fully realize the administrative support and coordination needed to implement this vision, USDA must elevate that office to an Assistant Secretary for Tribal Food and Agriculture, much as it recently elevated the Rural Development mission area to an Assistant Secretary level administrative office. To best serve Native producers, this office should coordinate internally within USDA and with all other federal departments needed to support and resource this vision. USDA must coordinate all consultation with the hubs and Tribal governments within each region and should confer and coordinate in the removal of barriers to program authorities and funding alongside with the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior.	

Water Infrastructure at Rural Development	No new funding needed
A special study conducted by USDA RD is needed to identify water and sewer systems that are in need of repair and replacement on Tribal lands that impact Native food economies and RD must be required to prioritize the completion of such projects within the applicable rural water infrastructure programs managed by USDA.	

Rural Development Funding Set Aside	No new funding needed
USDA RD should also set aside a sufficient amount of funding in its rural broadband programs to ensure that 20% of all rural broadband projects funded by these programs are delivered to the benefit of Native communities. Native food systems and producers must have the support of broadband access to implement advanced food systems on their lands.	

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Solutions to Uphold the Trust Responsibility

Expedite Agriculture Resource Management Plans	No new funding needed
The BIA, as authorized under the American Indian Agriculture Resource Management Act of 1993 (AIARMA), should expedite plans developed by Tribes under this existing federal law to support the important work of regional food hubs. BIA should use USDA-provided data sets, such as data collected that supports various conservation programs to inform its own activities without needing additional unnecessary conservation or environmental plans or the spending of unnecessary funds for duplicative appraisals.	

Comprehensive Reports of Agriculture Leases	No new funding needed
BIA should provide much more deeply comprehensive and detailed reports to Tribal leaders concerning the agriculture leases of Tribal lands that have historically been granted to non-Native land users. To further uphold the government-to-government relationship and trust responsibility, BIA must engage with Native landowners and Tribal governments to ensure that land lease rates to non-Natives are at modern, fair market rates and that sustainability provisions (as directed by Tribes) are included in and enforced in all land leases related to all Tribal lands. BIA must ensure that Native agriculturalists are not disadvantaged and that lease programs and lease rates are tailored to favor Native land use of Native resources for Native food system improvements and that Native agriculturalists are provided lower, more favorable lease rates when they move forward in control of their own food systems.	

Access to Traditional Foods on Federal Lands	No new funding needed
All Federal Land Management Agencies should establish a management framework to allow the gathering and harvesting of plants or plant parts by Native people for traditional and commercial purposes, as deemed appropriate by the Tribe.	

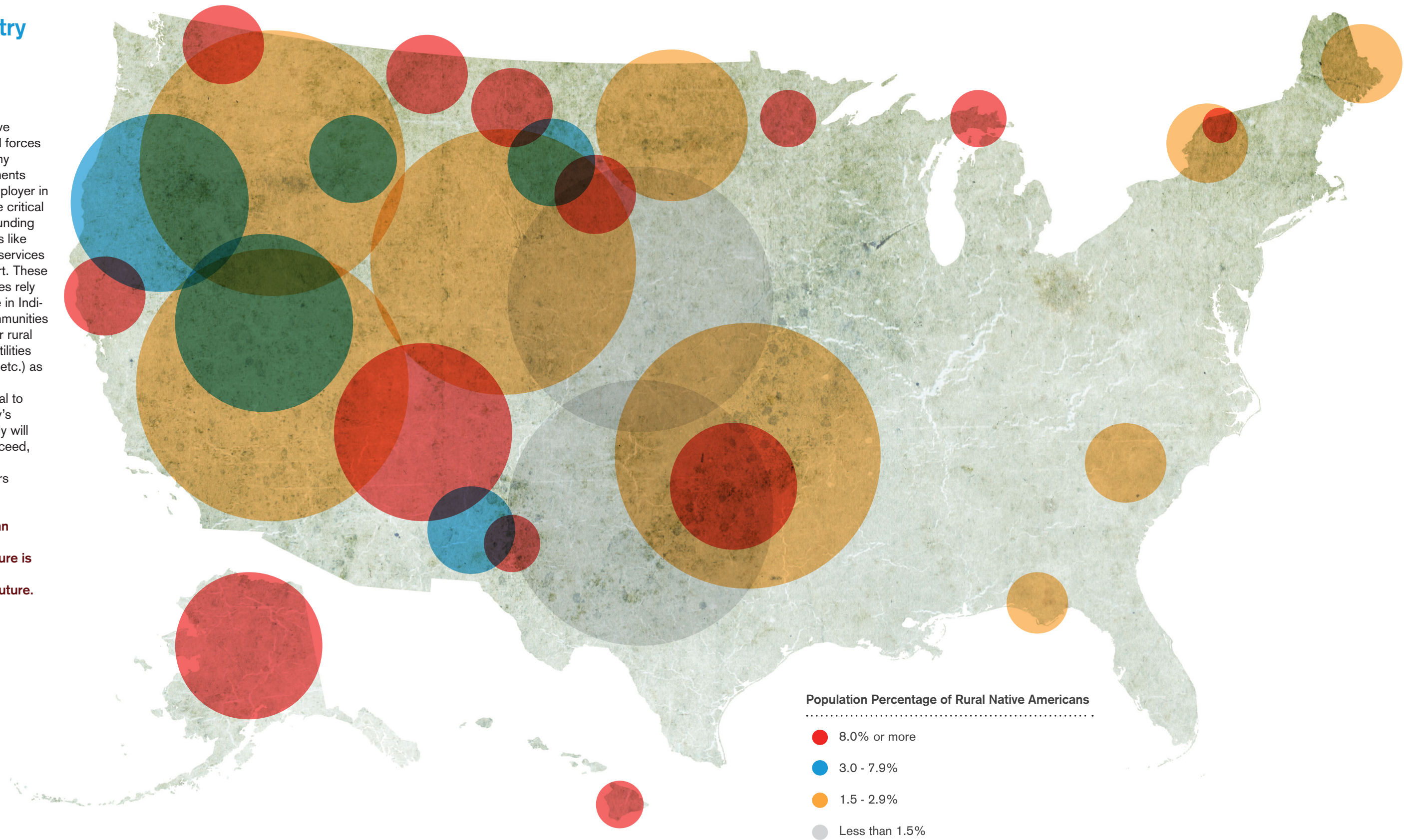
Interdepartmental Coordination	No new funding needed
Many federal departments have various programs that could be brought to bear in support of this vision. The federal government should undertake immediate interdepartmental examination of these programs, role of assisting USDA and BIA in achieving vision.	

Native Populations ARE Rural Populations

Investing in Indian Country Uplifts Rural America

Tribal Nations and Native producers are powerful forces in rural America. In many regions, Tribal governments serve as the largest employer in their region and provide critical services for their surrounding non-Native communities like healthcare emergency services and educational support. These surrounding communities rely on strong infrastructure in Indian Country. Native communities are in as dire a need for rural broadband and basic utilities (water, sewer, electric, etc.) as their rural community counterparts. It is critical to invest in Indian Country's potential so that not only will Tribal communities succeed, but their surrounding non-Native rural partners thrive too.

An investment in Indian Country's food and agriculture infrastructure is an investment in rural America's economic future.



Conclusion

As our Nation recovers from COVID-19, we know one thing is clear:

WE CANNOT GO BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE.

While this is true for many facets of American life, it is especially true for Native food and agriculture. The previous system did not work for Native farmers and ranchers before COVID-19, and we know it will not as we start our recovery.

Regional, resilient food systems that serve both Native producers and Native consumers are the answer.

A federal investment of approximately \$3.4 billion over ten years will build this resilient system that can uplift Tribal Nations, their producers, their citizens, and their rural neighbors.

The regional food hub model consisting of 10 Regional Hubs, Sub Hubs and accompanying programing will transform the landscape of Native American Agriculture.

Clearly, the reimagining and revitalization of Native food systems would deliver on the government's promises made so many centuries ago that formed the basis of Federal Trust Responsibility.

Not only is this important for Indian Country, it is important for national food security. Indian Country's food producers have played an important and invisible role in Americas food security. By reimagining and strengthening Native food systems now, we will ensure that this role is fully realized as we move into future.

The time for revitalizing our Native food economies is now. The stakes are too high to not act quickly.

Investing \$3.4 billion to build infrastructure will easily return 9+ billion of value. This investment will support Tribal economies, improve rural economies, ensure long term success for Native farmers and ranchers and will contribute to the creation of a self sustaining, resilient, new American food system.

When history looks back on how the United States recovered from COVID-19, we hope that it inspired us to create a better, more equitable food system for Indian Country.

About the Native American Agriculture Fund

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) provides grants to eligible organizations for business assistance, agricultural education, technical support, and advocacy services to support Native farmers and ranchers.

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.

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rancher



Michael Edward Roberts

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Richard Bryant Williams

Consultant
Former President and CEO,
American Indian College Fund



Elsie May Meeks

Board Member
Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines;
Former State Director, South
Dakota Rural Development; rancher

Total Investment to Reimagine Native Food Economies

		\$ PER HUB	# OF HUBS	# OF YEARS	TOTAL
BRICK AND MORTAR	Meat Processing	\$10,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$100,000,000
	Fruits, Vegetables, Specialty Crops and Grains	\$5,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$50,000,000
	Fisheries	\$10,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$100,000,000
	Poultry Eggs Dairy	\$5,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$50,000,000
	Warehouse and storage	\$3,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$30,000,000
	Food Waste Diversion	\$2,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$20,000,000
	Packaging	\$1,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$10,000,000
	Logistics Infrastructure		National	One Time Investment	\$3,000,000
	Trucking	\$1,500,000	10	One Time Investment	\$15,000,000
	Ancillary Costs	\$1,000,000	10	One Time Investment	\$10,000,000
		\$38,500,000			\$388,000,000
OPERATIONS	Staffing	\$1,000,000	10		\$100,000,000
	Maintenance	\$1,000,000	10		\$100,000,000
	Food Safety	\$1,000,000	10		\$100,000,000
	Distribution	\$1,000,000	10		\$100,000,000
		\$4,000,000	\$40,000,000		\$400,000,000
SUB HUB	Community Gardens for Every Tribe	\$10,000,000	National	One Time Investment	\$10,000,000
	Asset Mapping	\$5,000,000	National	One Time Investment	\$5,000,000
	Distribution Infrastructure	\$1,000,000	10	10	\$100,000,000
	Food Processing Infrastructure	\$1,000,000	10	10	\$100,000,000
	Operations and Maintenance	\$500,000	10	10	\$50,000,000
	Traditional Foods	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$10,000,000
		\$18,500,000			\$275,000,000
FINANCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE	USDA	\$50,000,000	National	10	\$500,000,000
	Treasury	\$50,000,000	National	10	\$500,000,000
	Commerce	\$50,000,000	National	10	\$500,000,000
	Farm Credit	\$10,000,000	National	10	\$100,000,000
	Risk Management	\$3,000,000	National	10	\$30,000,000
	Farm Service Agency	\$10,000,000	National	10	\$100,000,000
		\$173,000,000			\$1,730,000,000
GEN-A	Capital Access for Native New and Beginning Farmers	\$10,000,000	National	10	\$100,000,000
	Agriculture Resource Management Scholarships	\$10,000,000	National	10	\$100,000,000
	Youth Traditional Food Programming	\$3,000,000	National	10	\$30,000,000
	Emerging Entrepreneurs	\$5,000,000	National	10	\$50,000,000
	Career Experience	\$0	National		\$0
		\$28,000,000			\$280,000,000

		\$ PER HUB	# OF HUBS	# OF YEARS	TOTAL
COMMERCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP	Native Chefs	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$10,000,000
	Cooperatives	\$2,000,000	National	10	\$20,000,000
	E-Commerce	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$10,000,000
	Data Sovereignty*	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$3,500,000
		\$5,000,000			\$43,500,000
*START UP COST OF 1 MILLION, ANNUAL SUPPORT OVER 10 YEARS OF \$250,000					
CONSERVATION	Resource Management Plans	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$10,000,000
	NRCS Implementation Of Alternative Funding Arrangements	\$250,000	National	10	\$2,500,000
	Regenerative Grazing Implementation	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$10,000,000
	Carbon Sequestration Implementation	\$1,000,000	National	10	\$10,000,000
		\$3,250,000			\$32,500,000
RESEARCH AND TCU EXTENSION	Research Stations	\$4,000,000	National	10	\$40,000,000
	Native Agriculture Research Consortium	\$4,000,000	National	10	\$40,000,000
	Tribal College Additional Agriculture Support	\$50,000,000	National	One Time Investment	\$50,000,000
		\$58,000,000			\$130,000,000
KEY PARTNERS	Intertribal Agriculture Council	\$4,000,000	National	10	\$40,000,000
	Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative	\$2,000,000	National	10	\$20,000,000
	First Nations Development Institute	\$3,000,000	National	10	\$30,000,000
	Indian Land Tenure Foundation/Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program	\$4,000,000	National	10	\$40,000,000
		\$13,000,000			\$130,000,000
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	USDA Set Aside	\$0			\$0
	Direct Access to USDA Programs	\$0			\$0
	USDA Office of Tribal Relations	\$0			\$0
	Water Infrastructure at Rural Development	\$0			\$0
	Rural Development Set Aside	\$0			\$0
	Expedite Agriculture Resource Management Plans	\$0			\$0
	Comprehensive Reports on Agriculture Leases	\$0			\$0
	Access to Traditional Foods on Federal Lands	\$0			\$0
		\$0			\$0
		\$0			\$0

Grand Total\$3,409,000,000



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