

Native Agriculture *and* Food Systems INITIATIVE | 2011 to 2017

GRANTEE FEEDBACK REPORT

OUR MISSION

... to strengthen American Indian economies to support healthy Native communities. We invest in and create innovative institutions and models that strengthen asset control and support economic development for American Indian people and their communities.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

We believe that when armed with the appropriate resources, Native peoples hold the capacity and ingenuity to ensure the sustainable, economic, spiritual and cultural well-being of their communities.



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

INTRODUCTION

NAFSI Program 2011 to 2017

1,247 GRANTS REQUESTED = \$35,672,822

16.8%

83.2%

266 GRANTS AWARDED = \$6,005,427

981 GRANTS NOT FUNDED = \$29,667,395

For 38 years, First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) has worked with Native nations and Native organizations to restore Native American control and culturally compatible stewardship of the assets they own – be they land, human potential, cultural heritage or natural resources – and to establish new assets for ensuring the long-term vitality of Native communities. Native food systems are an important asset of Native nations. However, like most Native assets, Native foods systems have been altered, colonized and in some cases destroyed. At First Nations, we strongly believe that reclaiming control over local food systems is an important step toward ensuring the long-lasting health of Native people and communities. Therefore, much of our work in the arena of Native food systems has been aimed at assisting Native nations with reclaiming control of traditional food systems to eliminate food insecurity, build the health of communities and community members, and as a mechanism for entrepreneurship and economic development of Native nations. Briefly stated – we believe that Native food-system control helps promote healthy Native nations, economies and people.

Thanks to various philanthropic supporters, since 2011 First Nations has become the largest grantmaker in Indian Country that supports programmatic efforts to reclaim control of Native food systems. Under its Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative (NAFSI), First Nations' grant programs have supported projects related to agricultural entrepreneurship, enterprise development, increasing access to fresh and healthy foods, development of tribal food policy, reclamation of traditional diets, and increased food security in American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities across the United States. In all, the goal of NAFSI is to support innovative, ground-up program models in Native communities and disseminate those models to Indian Country as a whole.

This report provides grantee perspectives and feedback on the Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative and highlights the current state of grantee programs and other critical areas of need to grow and sustain their local programs. To collect the data in this report, First Nations and a consultant conducted a survey of all previous NAFSI grantees and the consultant conducted interviews of grantees. In all, a total of 71 individuals responded to our survey (a 27% response rate) and a total 10 programs were interviewed to inform this report.

WHY

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

Prior to colonization, Native peoples had self-sufficient and sustainable food systems. Over time, removal from traditional homelands, limited access to traditional food sources, and transitions to cash economies, among other things, significantly altered tribal food systems. Today, many Native communities and households are food insecure, dependent on outside food sources, and maintain a diet of Western foodstuffs that are often linked to negative and deteriorating health, community and economics.

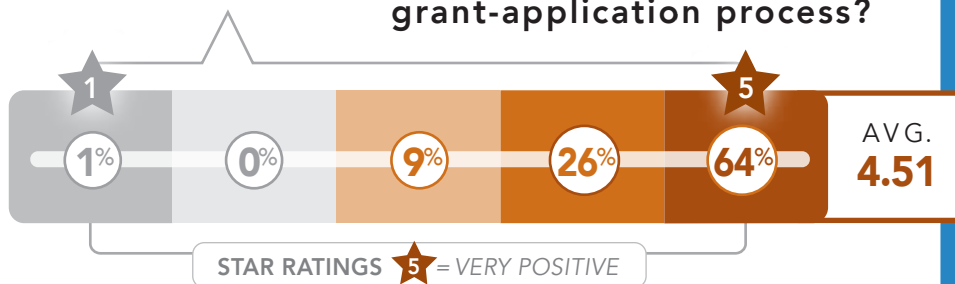
Recognizing that the loss of self-sufficient food systems is a contributing factor to the myriad issues Native communities face today, First Nations works with and supports Native communities in reclaiming local food systems. Local food-system control is foundational to reversing years of colonization aimed at the disintegration of cultural and traditional belief systems and dismantling of Native social and economic systems. If Native communities can control local food systems, food can become a driver for cultural revitalization, improving community health and economic development.

Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative GRANTMAKING PROCESS

First Nations gets high marks related to the grantmaking process and grant-reporting process. In all, 90% of survey respondents ranked the grantmaking process a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale (indicating a positive or very positive rating), and 87% gave similar ratings on the First Nations reporting process. Many respondents indicated that the First Nations grantmaking process is much more simple and straightforward than other grant programs they have encountered.

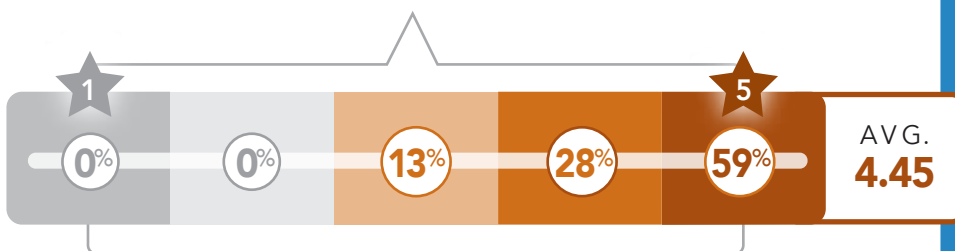
1 QUESTION

How would you rank First Nations' online grant-application process?



2 QUESTION

How would you rank First Nations' grant-reporting requirements and online reporting process?



3 QUESTION

How could First Nations improve its online grant-application process?

SUGGESTIONS for IMPROVEMENT

- Improve the upload process for grantees.
- Once completed, have a link that sends a copy of the complete application, including budget, to the applicant's email of choice. This assures that what was meant to be submitted matches what was actually submitted.
- Tailor the application more to each type of grant.

NAFSI

Program Goals

- Invest in Native-led innovation to restore Native food-system control. This includes improving Native food, diet, health, food entrepreneurship and food policy in Native communities.
- Through training and technical assistance, grow the organizational capacity and human capital of communities served so these communities can exercise greater food-system control.
- Convene communities to grow their professional networks and grow the food sovereignty movement across Native communities.

4 QUESTION

How could First Nations improve its grant-reporting process?

SUGGESTIONS for IMPROVEMENT

- More training on how to do the reporting and the information that is needed.
- Send more reminders via email.
- The technology should provide access to previous reports.
- More check-ins with First Nations staff as those are helpful.

GRANTEE

Use of Funds

The most common uses of grant funds were for the following two activities:

72% Engage with the community regarding traditional foods

62% Expand or improve food access

Other Selected Uses of Funds:

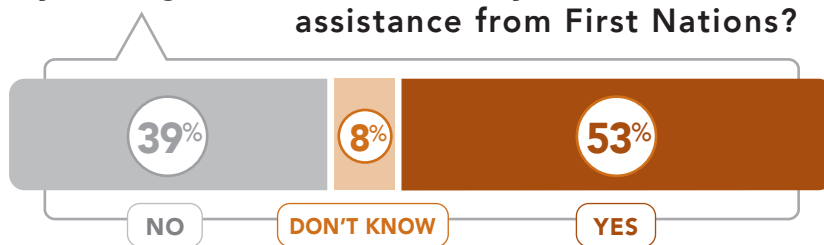
- Conduct Food Sovereignty Assessments
- Establish Farmers' Markets
- Nutrition Education Classes
- Strategic Planning

Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Overall, First Nations received good reviews for its technical assistance (TA) and training programs, with 53% of respondents reporting that they received technical assistance. Seventy-six percent of those receiving TA ranked the benefit as a 4 or 5 (extremely helpful) with an overall score of 4.29. The most frequent (20%) reported use of TA was for Grant Administration/Management.

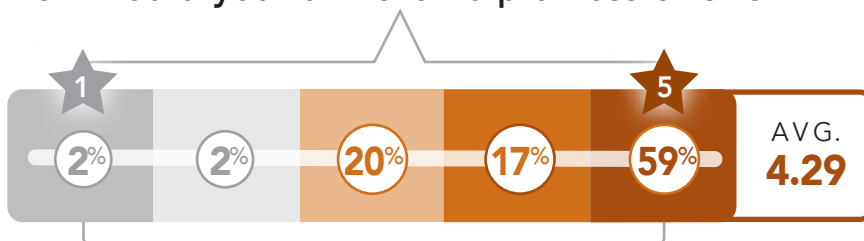
5 QUESTION

Did your organization receive any direct technical assistance from First Nations?



6 QUESTION

How would you rank the helpfulness of this TA?



7 QUESTION

What could have made this TA more helpful?

SUGGESTIONS for IMPROVEMENT

- Provide more case study examples.
- Connecting communities with one another to learn would be helpful.
- Share more funding sources.
- Allow more time with our technical assistance advisors. This also includes more technical assistance hours.

Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative CONVENINGS, WORKSHOPS and TRAINING EVENTS

Convenings, workshops and training events are a highly-utilized and valued component of the NAFSI program, with 79% of survey respondents indicating that they have attended a First Nations event. The Food Sovereignty Summit is the most heavily attended event by far, with 64% indicating that they had attended. The L.E.A.D. Conference was a distant second, with 17% indicating that they had attended that event in that past.

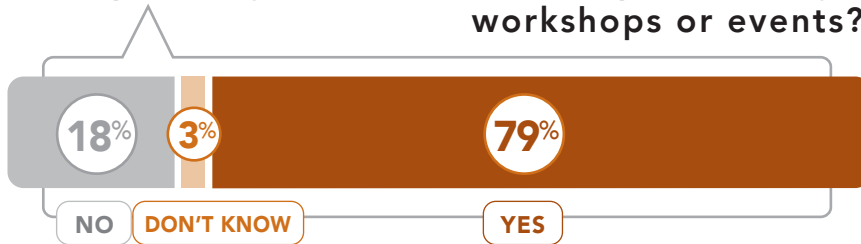
Overall, survey respondents indicated that these events are beneficial to them, with 73% scoring them as either a 4 or 5, with an average score of 4.24 overall. The most beneficial aspects were ranked as follows:

Peer networking **76%**

Workshops/training **75%**

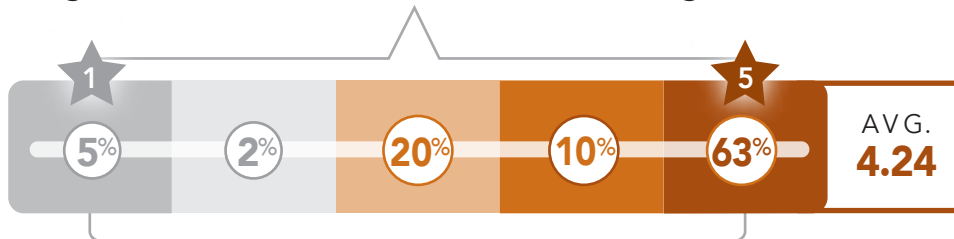
8 QUESTION

Did your organization attend any convenings, workshops or events?



9 QUESTION

How would you rate the overall benefit that your organization received from attending this event?



10 QUESTION

What could have made the event more beneficial?

SUGGESTIONS for IMPROVEMENT

- More information about traditional foods
- I wish we had brought more people from our community
- Start on a weekend
- Have regional breakouts for networking and sharing
- More in-depth sessions



Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative WEBINARS

From 2011 to 2017, First Nations hosted more than 100 webinars to provide training on various topics ranging from conducting a food sovereignty assessment to food safety issues in Native communities. The survey respondents indicated a fairly high usage of webinars, with 75% indicating that their communities have watched previous First Nations webinars. They also report relatively high satisfaction, with 75% getting a score of 4 or 5, with an average score of 4.19 overall.

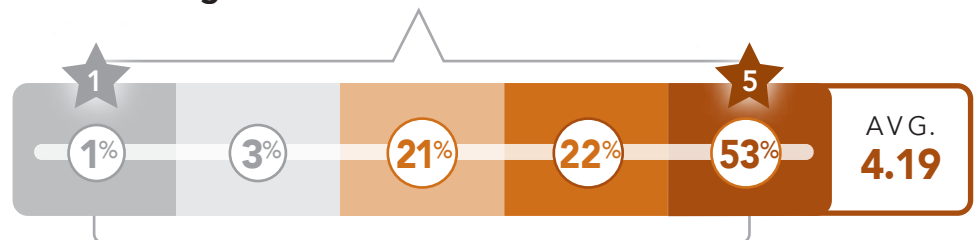
11 QUESTION

Did your organization participate in attending any First Nations webinars?



12 QUESTION

How would you rate the overall benefit that your organization received from the webinars?



13 QUESTION

What could make our webinars more beneficial?

SUGGESTIONS for IMPROVEMENT

- Have more of them
- Record them and provide access to the information on your website
- Allow more interaction from the audience
- Establish a regular schedule so I know when to expect them

Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative IMPACT

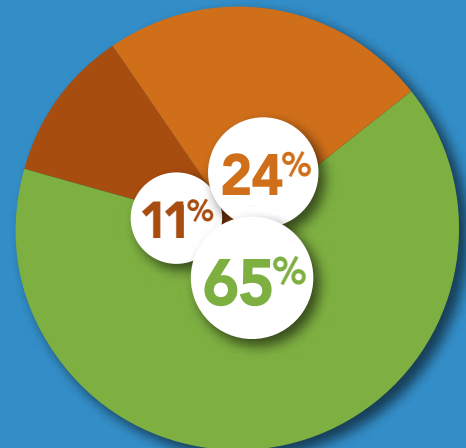
Based on survey responses, the NAFSI program has had a relatively high impact. Nearly 88% of respondents noted that their food sovereignty efforts are ongoing, though at different stages. Nearly 1 in 4 organizations (24%) reported that today they have a “robust and successful” food sovereignty initiative. And an additional nearly 2 out of 3 (65%) reported that they are still at the beginning stages of their food sovereignty initiative and are pleased with the results to date. Eleven percent of communities supported have stalled or stopped their food sovereignty effort.

“The more successful we become,
the more we realize **how much we have left to do.**”

How would you describe the current status of your food sovereignty initiative?

ANSWER CHOICES

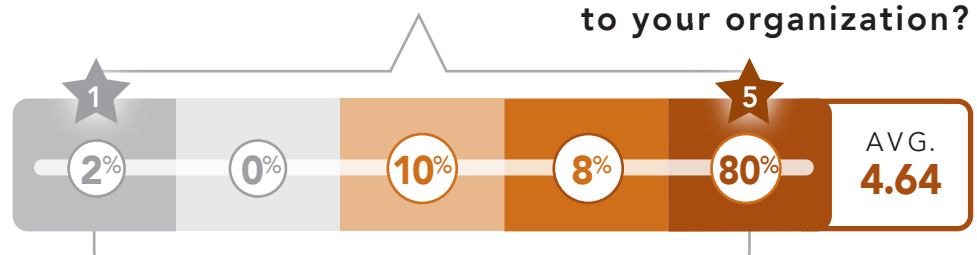
- We have a robust and successful food sovereignty initiative
- We have started and most people are pleased with our progress
- We started but we ran out of money and our efforts are on hold



First Nations gets very positive reviews for its NAFSI program, with 80% scoring the NAFSI program with a full 5-star rating, with an average rating of 4.64 overall.

14 QUESTION

Overall, how would you rate the benefit of NAFSI to your organization?



Community Food Sovereignty Programs

Community responses about their local food sovereignty initiatives (FSI) reinforce the fact that food sovereignty is a very complex and diverse concept in Native communities. This is reflected by the diverse departments that house local food sovereignty initiatives. Moreover, a majority of communities noted that they had a single individual responsible for their food sovereignty initiative. Ultimately, the program that is assigned to administer local food sovereignty initiatives will have a significant impact on the goals for the project.

15 QUESTION

Do you have a dedicated person to coordinate your FSI?



Various coordinators for community food sovereignty initiatives:

Dedicated Food Sovereignty Program

Tribal Ag Department

Food Distribution Program

Family & Human Services Department

Natural Resource Department

Forestry Program

Environmental Department

Community Planning/Development

University Ag Extension

Economic Development

Cultural Department

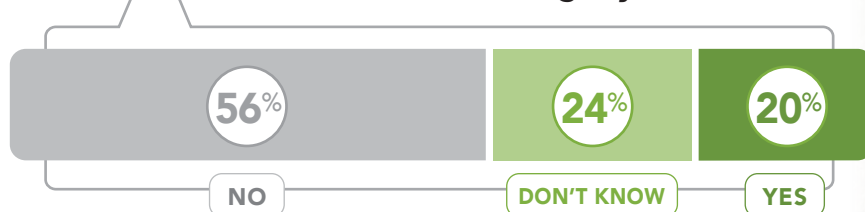
Ag Enterprise

FOOD POLICY

Food policy appears to be a challenging component for many communities. Fifty-six percent of survey respondents stated that they have no food policies and an additional 24% didn't know if they had food policies. Food policy is a complicated subject and it is difficult to get it right.

16 QUESTION

Has your tribe established any food-related policies to support your food sovereignty initiative?



INTERNAL CAPACITY

Survey respondents ranked themselves in the middle of the 5-point scale on questions related to overall internal capacity to manage their food sovereignty initiatives.

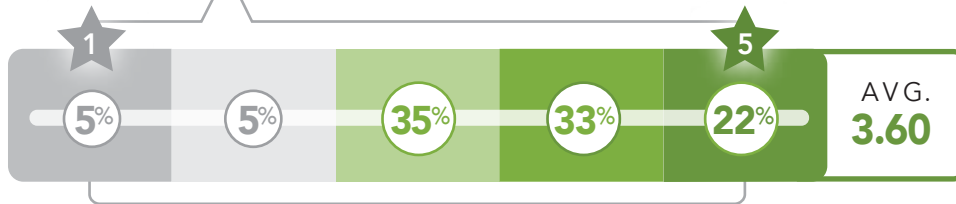
There is a strong need for ongoing funding for organizations to sustain and build their local food sovereignty efforts.

Organizational structure of food sovereignty efforts is mixed and hosted by various departments. More training or guidance on different models could help communities.

Grantmaking appears to have a high demand (NAFSI should emphasize long-term sustainability)

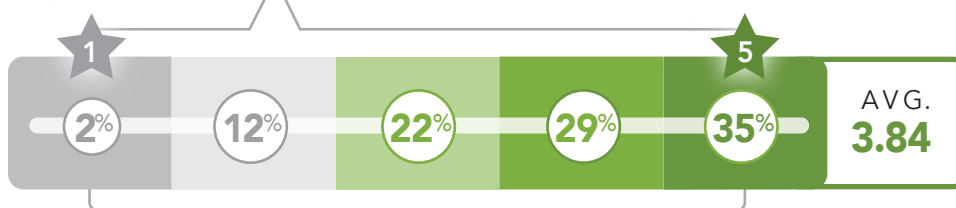
17 QUESTION

How would you rate internal capacity to implement your food sovereignty initiative?



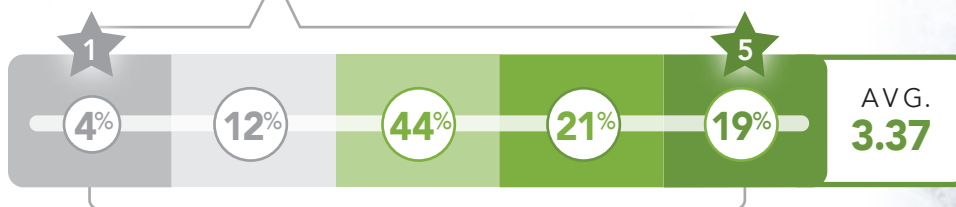
18 QUESTION

How would you rate the support of your elected officials?



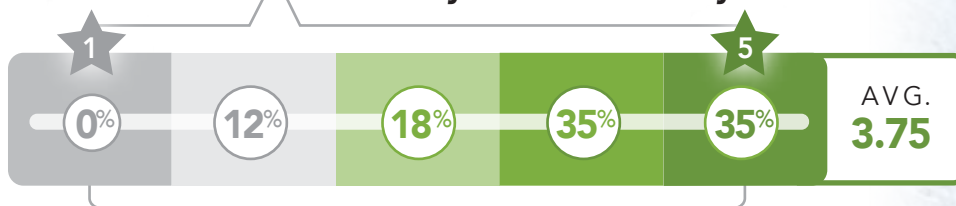
19 QUESTION

How would you rate the support of your local farmers/ranchers?



20 QUESTION

How would you rate the overall support of your community members?



21 QUESTION

Aside from funding, what else could First Nations do to support your community's food sovereignty initiative?

- Assistance with material for youth on healthy eating.
- We would love to bring some youth and tribal elder leaders to the Food Sovereignty Summit.
- Continue to provide technical assistance when needed.
- Help with direct implementation of local food sovereignty programs at community level.
- Continue publishing information tips for communities.
- Strategic planning.
- Any training on site is helpful.
- Set up a conference space in which we and other programs innovating in this area can share what we are doing.
- More webinars.
- Emphasize in practical terms the benefits of traditional food systems.
- Engaging as a partner in development through regular/semi-regular check-ins would be helpful. Just more time spent asking questions and helping us clearly see our needs and opportunities.
- Provide technical assistance, resources, professional linkages, mentoring.

OVERALL FINDINGS

FINDING 1

There is widespread need for food sovereignty financial sustainability training for communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS | First Nations has worked to increase funding available to Native communities to further food sovereignty. However, those efforts should be supplemented with training for communities on financial sustainability models.

FINDING 2

Most communities feel limited by human resource capital.

RECOMMENDATIONS | Finding qualified individuals to lead food sovereignty efforts remains a challenge and also finding a sufficient labor pool to fill seasonal positions remains a challenge. Technical assistance and training does help build human capital for leadership positions, but more information and models are needed to understand how communities are finding effective labor to fill positions in agricultural work.

FINDING 3

High level of interest in effective strategic planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS | Tribes across all stages of food sovereignty growth and development are looking to develop strategic plans. This is a critical need in the technical assistance First Nation provides, and thinking of ways to further support these efforts may help communities as well. Perhaps a separate program to fund the development of strategic plans to help Native communities develop, implement or update existing plans as their food sovereignty programs mature and gain momentum.

FINDING 4

Communities want effective ways to integrate tradition, culture and youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS | First Nations has been active in supporting traditional foods access in Native communities. But communities are looking for more resources, tools and models for programs that support traditional food access, and identifying more specific outcomes of traditional food programs in Native communities. More model sharing and mentoring among Native communities can help expand the traditional foods knowledge that communities demand.

FINDING 5

Seeking role models, mentors or examples of working programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS | Mentorship among Native communities seems to be in high demand. Many communities noted that they would like to see what other communities are doing and have a mentor who can be called on for additional support and mentorship.

CONCLUSION

First Nations' grant investments have been effective at spurring and catalyzing food sovereignty program efforts in Native communities aimed at reclaiming local food systems, combating food insecurity and growing food-related businesses. In fact, over 85% of programs supported by First Nations are still in operation, though some continue to face challenges to long-term program sustainability. But as the Native food sovereignty movement evolves, so should programming and funding. Programs supported by First Nations are evolving as many Native communities transition from start-up efforts to more mature food sovereignty programs that are seeking higher impact along with financial sustainability. Thus, technical assistance, grantmaking and other kinds of trainings can continue to provide tools to Native communities to enhance, grow and sustain their community-based efforts.



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