

For: State and County Offices

2000 COC Election Outreach and Nominations

Approved by: Acting Executive Director for State Operations



1 Overview

A

Background

The Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (the Act) requires the Secretary to solicit and accept nominations from organizations representing the interests of socially disadvantaged groups.

The report by the Civil Rights Action Team concluded that the County Office delivery system is hampered by the lack of diversity. Under-representation of minorities and females on COC's and staffs may prevent minority and female producers from receiving information about programs and available services.

B

Diversity on Committees

To ensure diversity on county or area committees, FSA requires County Offices to:

- solicit and accept nominations from groups representing producers who are fairly representative of agricultural producers in the county or area
- seek female and minority nominees
- actively advertise the opportunity to nominate during the nomination period.

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<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>January 1, 2001</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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1 Overview (Continued)

C Publicizing Elections

Last year FSA was criticized that the election was not publicized early enough to allow groups to:

- notify group members of the election through the groups' publications

Note: Some publications may only be issued on a quarterly basis.

- contact all potential nominees.

In an effort to ensure that producers are adequately and timely informed about COC elections and procedures, outreach activities shall begin as soon as possible.

D Purpose

This notice instructs STC's and COC's to:

- begin accepting nominations for the COC election
- actively seek minority, female, and producers from under-represented groups for nomination
- make COC election information available to local producers using FSA county or areawide newsletters, local female and minority-oriented newspapers, radio, and television stations, if available.

Note: The election calendar is in paragraph 3.

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2 Action

A SED and STC Action

STC and SED shall be responsible for contacting State level offices of minority, female, and other under-represented groups. SED shall:

- take an active role in contacting under represented group leaders
- ensure that representatives fully understand the role of COC's and the process of election
- ensure cooperation and assistance from County Offices at the local level.

Notes: An under-represented group is a group of individuals under-represented on COC, who have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because they are identified as a member of a group, without regard to their individual qualities. Members of this group are also defined as socially disadvantaged (SDA) in FmHA Instruction 1943-A.

SED's shall coordinate this effort when State-level offices involve more than 1 State.

SED, with the State Office Outreach Coordinator or designee, shall require each COC to develop and submit to SED by October 5 a plan to ensure that all producers are adequately informed of the COC election. The plan shall provide for targeting the generally under-represented producers such as minorities and females.

SED, Outreach Coordinator, or designee, shall review each plan and ensure that the County Office is properly providing necessary COC election information and procedures.

B COC Action

COC shall immediately develop a plan to inform all producers concerning the:

- COC election processes
 - specific actions that the County Office will take to ensure that:
 - each minority, female, and other under-represented group is contacted as applicable
 - nomination forms and assistance are provided to all producers.
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2 Action (Continued)

B

COC Action (Continued)

It is critical to FSA's future that employees ensure that all producers have an equal opportunity to be a candidate for COC. COC shall inform employees to:

- listen to producers' concerns and suggestions
- explain FSA programs and missions
- develop good working relationships with all producers.

Nomination of eligible producers is the primary method used to obtain candidates for COC elections. COC's shall:

- complete the slate of nominees according to 15-AO, subparagraph 107 E
- add additional nominees if the required number of nominees is not received.

If nominees are added, COC, before adding any other candidates, shall add nominees up to the minimum number required, as follows:

- add a minority candidate to the slate unless a minority is already serving on the COC or is nominated
- add a female candidate to the slate unless a female is already serving on the COC or is nominated.

Note: Begin to accept nomination forms upon receipt of this notice.

C

CEC Action

CEC shall:

- take an active role in contacting leaders of minority, female, and other under-represented groups
 - ensure that these group representatives fully understand the role of COC
 - be available, at the request of these groups, to meet with group members to fully explain the election procedures.
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D

Contact

If there are questions about this notice, contact Karl Choice at 202-720-8782.

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3 2000 COC Election Calendar

A
Deadlines for
COC Election
Activities

The following table provides dates that shall be followed for the 2000 election.

Date	Activities
Immediately	Begin outreach activities, add eligible voters to the County name and address file, and accept nomination forms.
September 1	COC completes review of LAA boundaries and sends changes to STC. Note: COC shall document in the minutes the review and determinations concerning LAA boundaries.
September 15	STC completes review of COC LAA boundary changes and approves by September 15, 2000. Note: STC shall document in the minutes the review and determinations concerning LAA boundaries.
October 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete eligible voters list• Issue public notice of election and LAA boundaries• Right to nominate candidates.
October 30	Final date to receive nomination forms.
November 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review nominations• Complete slates of nominees.
November 20	Final date for mailing letter to nominees.
November 24	Final date to mail ballots.
November 28	Suggested date to mail reminder postal cards.
December 4	Final date for returning completed ballots.
December 11	Final date for counting ballots.

Note: It is expected that all State and County Offices shall follow this calendar.
