

For: State and County Offices

2002 COC Election Outreach and Nominations

Approved by: 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 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 requires the Secretary to report the participation rate of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers according to race, ethnicity, and gender.

The report by the Civil Rights Action Team concluded that under-representation of minorities and females on COC's and CMC's may prevent minority and female producers from receiving information about programs and available services.

B

Socially Disadvantaged Group Representation on COC's

To ensure representation of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers on COC's or area committees, FSA requires County Offices to:

- actively solicit and accept nominations from socially disadvantaged groups of agricultural producers in the county or area
- actively advertise the opportunity to nominate during the nomination period.

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<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>January 1, 2003</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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1 Overview (Continued)

C Publicizing Elections

FSA shall continue to publicize and contact socially disadvantaged groups to:

- nominate eligible candidates to represent them
 - ensure that all producers are adequately and timely informed about COC elections and procedures. Begin outreach activities immediately.
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D Purpose

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

- begin accepting nominations for the 2002 COC election
- actively seek minority, female, and producers from socially disadvantaged groups for nomination
- make COC election information available to local producers using FSA county or area newsletters, local 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 socially disadvantaged groups. SED shall:

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

Notes: Socially disadvantaged group means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

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

SED, in consultation with the State Office **Outreach Coordinator** or designee, shall require each COC to develop and submit to SED **by September 6, 2002**, a plan to ensure that all producers are adequately informed of the COC election. The plan shall provide for targeting the socially disadvantaged groups.

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

There is no change in ballots this year. The 2001 ballots, dated May 31, 2001, can be used for the 2002 elections. States will receive additional ballots for County Office distribution by September 20.

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

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

C

CED Action

CED 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
 - locally reproduce the nomination notices from the FSA internet at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/elecpostc01.pdf> and post them in public locations.
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Contact

If there are questions about this notice, contact Karl Choice at 202-720-8782; FAX 202-690-3309; e-mail Karl_Choice@wdc.fsa.usda.gov.

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3 2002 COC Election Calendar

A
Deadlines for
COC Election
Activities

The following table provides dates that shall be followed for the 2002 election.

Date	Activities
Immediately	Begin outreach activities, add eligible voters to the County name and address file, and accept nomination forms.
September 20	Complete COC review of local administrative area (LAA) boundaries and send changes to STC. Note: COC shall document in the minutes the review and determinations concerning LAA boundaries.
October 4	Complete STC review of COC LAA boundary changes and approve by October 5, 2002. Note: STC shall document in the minutes the review and determinations concerning LAA boundaries.
October 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete eligible voters list.• Issue public notice of election and LAA boundaries.• Right to nominate candidates.
October 28	Final date to receive nomination forms.
November 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review nominations.• Complete slates of nominees.
November 15	Final date for mailing letter to nominees.
November 19	Final date to mail ballots.
November 25	Suggested date to mail reminder postal cards.
December 2	Final date for returning completed ballots.
December 9	Final date for counting ballots.

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