

Texas Small Farmers & Ranchers/Community Based Organization



HISTORY

The Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers Community Based Organization (TSFR/CBO) is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization founded in 1998 by W. Wade Ross (State Director) and, his wife, Anita Ross (Executive Administrator) while farming and ranching on 120 acres in Bryan, Texas - a legacy from his paternal grandfather, Jack Ross (a runaway slave from South Carolina in the late 1890's). The uncultivated property was offered to Grampa Jack for \$1,200 by the townfolks that wanted to keep him in the community for his excellent blacksmith talent. He was allowed to pay \$100 a year for 12 years, so since he couldn't read or write he notched an old tree in front of his little shack each year before he went into town to make his annual payment. On the 12th year after he made his final payment in town, a group of white men told him that they had chopped down his "payment tree" so he had to start his payments again which Jack did for another 12 years. To this day, the family cannot find a tree with his notches.

Recognition that the time had come for small and underserved farmers and ranchers to organize themselves, to effectively articulate their needs and issues, to chart their own destiny, and to begin to engage themselves in the public policy development process was a result of the "100 Farmers Conference" Coalition signed into existence on August 7, 1998 and held at Langston University, Oklahoma with representation from each of the lower seventeen southern states. The purpose of the conference was to initiate a process by small and underserved farmers and rural residents to develop organizational capacity to impact public policy development. The Texas participants signing the 100 Farmers Conference Coalition included Wade Ross (current TSFR/CBO State Director) and Omar Garza (Texas /Mexico Border Coalition CBO) which authorized them (under the direction of President Clinton) to return to Texas to organize and advance the cause of underserved communities.

TSFR/CBO was initiated in Bryan, Texas by a group which included 30 Black farmers and ranchers from surrounding counties as its first members and also a few representatives in attendance from Prairie View A&M University (a 2501 - 1890 school) just prior to the settlement in April, 1999 of the infamous Pigford v. Glickman class action lawsuit. The lawsuit was filed in 1997 by Timothy Pigford, who was joined by 400 Black American farmer plaintiffs. Dan Glickman, the Secretary of Agriculture, was the nominal defendant. The allegations were that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) treated black farmers unfairly when deciding to allocate price support loans, disaster payments, "farm ownership" loans, and operating loans; and that the USDA had failed to process subsequent complaints about racial discrimination.

PURPOSE

TSFR/CBO was established with the purpose of reaching the goals of strengthening USDA outreach efforts to limited resource, traditionally underserved, and under-represented farmer and rancher customers to ensure USDA and coordinate program delivery outreach efforts in counties throughout Texas.

This CBO is actively accelerating assistance to minority, females, limited resource producers, veteran, beginning farmers and ranchers by providing outreach assistance in receiving information, technical and program assistance from USDA, state and county agencies as well as various Texas universities.

MISSION

TSFR/CBO Outreach Core Functions towards the underserved farmers and rancher's community are:

- Communication - To develop and deliver effective communication strategies to promote USDA outreach efforts that provides access to USDA wide program related information, communication vehicles and resources
- Education and Training – To develop and deliver effective education and training that serves as a linkage to USDA wide programs
- Program Delivery & Customer Service – To develop, manage, coordinate and support national level outreach initiatives, programs and activities that provide information and technical assistance and to underserved USDA constituents.
- Outreach Research & Evaluation – To acquire, collect, develop, analyze and disseminate new knowledge, data and information related to USDA outreach activities to underserved constituencies.

TSR/CBO was established to be a “Point of Contact” and liaison within the Black American farmers and ranchers community that since its inception and to date provides effective outreach of at least 1 to 4 outreach events monthly to more than 400 Black American farmer and rancher operations in 54 counties in East and Central Texas resulting in an expanding list of small farmers, ranchers, public and private sector associates and affiliates that participate in and support the organization’s mission, activities, goals and projects.

Note: On September 12, 2012, Wade Ross, Founder and State Director of TSFR/CBO received the USDA 64th Annual Secretary’s Honor Award in Washington DC - *“For forging partnerships between government agencies and other entities leading to changes that promote sustainable agricultural client bases and healthy environments for rural and underserved communities.”*

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

TSFR/CBO Administrative Capacity includes a **Board of Directors** of five members that effectively fulfills its roles and responsibilities as follows:

- Mission – understands the Mission and Purpose of TSFR/CBO
- Legal – ensures compliance with federal, state, and local regulations and fulfillment of contract obligations, including payroll taxes and filing of contractual obligations
- Financial – safeguards assets from misuse, waste, and embezzlement through financial oversight and making sure that effective internal controls are in place
- CEO – monitors and evaluates the performance of the CEO on a regular basis and delegates the day-to-day management of the CEO
- Planning – participates with staff in determining program and administrative strategies and overall long-term priorities
- Programs – approves and annual operating plan, monitors implementation, and makes sure there are program evaluation to measure impact
- Efficiency and Impact – ensures a realistic budget that maximizes the use of resources
- Financial Liability – makes sure that TSFR/CBO has an overall fundraising strategy to support the effect delivery of services and monitors the implementation of the funding plan
- Policies – approves personnel and other policies and review them periodically to ensure they are up to date and relevant
- Evaluation – regularly assess whether TSFR/CBO is achieving it's purpose (effectiveness), at what cost (efficiency), and is meeting the needs of the community.