



National Association of Conservation Districts

To: State Association Leadership and NACD Board of Directors

From: Jeremy Peters, CEO of NACD

Date: November 2, 2017

Subject: NACD Announcement of Technical Assistance Grants to Conservation Districts

Good afternoon,

Today, NACD launched a [webpage](#) announcing the availability of \$9 million in technical assistance grants for conservation districts.

This funding will help conservation districts build their technical assistance capacity and thus enhance their ability to provide conservation planning and technical assistance specific to conservation practice implementation. NACD will administer these funds – provided by NRCS – to conservation districts in high priority locations across the nation. The highest priority locations will be identified by state/territory conservation partnerships based on the districts' immediate conservation needs, EQIP workload, and staffing requirements given these workloads.

Of the \$9 million available to conservation districts through this grant opportunity, \$7,357,500 will be allocated to hire district employees that will assist landowners in implementing EQIP contracts. Thus, the bulk of the applications approved for funding will address staff shortages specific to EQIP implementation. Additionally, \$1,642,500 is available for conservation districts that require greater capacity to provide conservation planning assistance. The bulk of the applications approved for funding will address staff shortages specific to EQIP implementation while a more limited number of agreements will be available for planning technical assistance.

Overall, NACD anticipates that about 180 staff years of work will be funded through these agreements with conservation districts. However, we also anticipate these staff year costs will vary considerably across the nation given differences in position type and cost of living.

Partnership

NACD is actively soliciting applications from all state/territory conservation partnerships for these funds. For most states/territories, these partnerships will include representatives of a state/territory's association of conservation districts, NRCS, state conservation agency, association of conservation district employees, and RC&D association, where applicable.

For tribal conservation district applications, we ask that the state/territory partnership leaders



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advise tribal leaders to send their submissions directly to NACD Director of Projects and Partnerships Rich Duesterhaus at rich-duesterhaus@nacdnet.org.

Each state/territory partnership is asked to work together to develop their request for funding. In every state and territory, the NRCS state conservationist will be able to provide data on conservation workload essential to developing an application.

State conservationists will identify where the highest needs for technical assistance exist in their state/territory and will communicate to their state partners and NACD where the highest priorities are, as well as what type of technical assistance is required and what resource concerns need to be addressed, as applicable. Note: This information from state conservationists will be used by NACD to evaluate funding applications, but will not be considered as an application for assistance.

The National Conservation Partnership – made up of NACD, NRCS, NCDEA, NASCA, and NARC&DC – sees this grant opportunity as a prime way to assist in continually strengthening state conservation partnership delivery of conservation services. To learn more about the partnership's goal to build and galvanize the state conservation partnerships, [see the 2015 National Conservation Partnership MOA](#).

Submission Guidelines

State and territory partner applications for funding will be evaluated by a panel comprised of National Conservation Partnership representatives in batches. The first batch will be evaluated the week of November 27th and awards will be announced on the 30th. Please see the "Evaluation of Applications" section below for subsequent review periods.

NACD's goal is to have all of the \$9 million available placed prior to March 31, 2018. An initial payment of \$5,000 – or 5% of the requested budget – will be provided to a recipient district when notified of their selection. This initial payment will help districts begin the hiring process as soon as possible. Once a district signs an agreement with NACD, the full agreed to amount will be provided. The agreement holders/signers will be responsible for the completion of the agreed upon work, and should complete that work within twelve months.

However, recipient districts will have 13 months to use their funds following the receipt of their first payment. This additional month will allow for time needed to recruit and hire new employees or contractors. In case of extenuating circumstances, a time extension may be granted, but districts are asked to use their funds to increase technical assistance capacity in as timely and effective a manner as possible.



Each application for funding requires:

- **A 20% match for funds received.** Overall, NACD's agreement with NRCS requires a 25% match. However for each NACD-district agreement, NACD is fulfilling the first 5%. For the remaining 20%, cash match is preferred. In-kind match will be considered and a mix of the two will also be considered.
- **A metrics chart** (see [metrics chart template](#)) **with the planned accomplishments filled in for each proposal.** E.g. number of practices designed, installed, and certified, including acres or plans assisted and resource concerns to be addressed.
- **Agreeing to provide quarterly reports on progress according to the agreement metrics.** Some metrics will be applicable to all NACD-district agreements, while others will vary based on the specific work being carried out.
- **State partnership coversheet** (see [template coversheet](#)), which includes the state summary budget and match information.
- **Completed applications for each conservation district where work will occur** (see [template conservation district application](#)), including budget and match information, plus a signature from each applying conservation district.

Evaluation of Applications

Applications will be evaluated in batches with the first batch to be reviewed the week of November 27th and subsequent batches reviewed weekly until all funds are placed. Thus the second batch will be reviewed the week of December 3rd with announcements on December 7th and then the following weeks until the funds are all placed. The evaluations will include the state rankings (which is the first step of the evaluation), the national EQIP workload by state, completeness of the application, and a narrative justifying conservation planning needs, including any high priority situations such as hurricane or storm recovery areas.

Contact Information

Applications should be submitted by a state/territory association of conservation districts to NACD Director of Projects and Partnerships Rich Duesterhaus at rich-duesterhaus@nacdnet.org, with a copy to the state or territory's respective NACD regional representative listed on the next page.



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NACD's regional representatives are available to assist you should you have any questions:

- Jeff Burwell, Pacific and Southwest Regions – jeff-burwell@nacdn.net
- Phylis Vandevere, Southeast Region – phylis-vandevere@nacdn.net
- Laura Demmel, Northern Plains Region – laura-demmel@nacdn.net
- Eric Hansen, Northeast Region – eric-hansen@nacdn.net
- Beth Mason, North Central Region – beth-mason@nacdn.net
- Vacant, South Central Region – rich-duesterhaus@nacdn.net

Additional Information

A one-page briefier about this project was distributed previously. Also a set of FAQs has been distributed and will be updated throughout the project as needed. [Both documents are available on NACD's Technical Assistance Grants webpage.](#) They should be reviewed as applications are being prepared.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity to advance conservation delivery and the conservation partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Peters'.

Jeremy Peters

Chief Executive Officer

National Association of Conservation Districts