



Frequently Asked Questions | Published September 29, 2017

1. How much funding is available?

\$9 million - 82% of which will go to support EQIP implementation and 18% for conservation planning.

2. For how long a period is this funding available?

Generally, one year. There could be a need for an extension in a few cases and we are planning to provide for that.

3. What is the requirement for matching funds?

A 25% match is required. NACD is capturing 5%, so each individual district will be required to provide a 20% match. For example, for every dollar of the agreement, \$0.80 is granted and a \$0.20 match is required of the district.

- a. Must the match be cash or in-kind? Preferably cash, but both will be considered.
- b. Some suggestions for match include: funding from county and state government; existing employees spending time on this project such as overseeing a new hire. More suggested options are included in the funding announcement.
- c. Match should come from non-federal sources for either cash or in-kind match.

4. Who is eligible to receive grant funds?

Conservation districts are intended to be the primary recipients of funds. In instances where conservation districts are unable to participate, state associations of conservation districts and/or state conservation agencies could be eligible. NACD will also consider joint agreement between two districts, or a district and an association or state agency.

5. What program TA service(s) are needed?

EQIP implementation and conservation planning.

6. What is the process to identify needed TA services?

Each state conservation partnership will pick their highest priority locations.

7. When must grant TA services be completed?

The initial goal is to provide one year of technical assistance services from the time a conservation district signs their agreement.



8. Must TA services be provided by new hires (increased capacity) or can existing district TA staff do the work?

Both, however the expectation is to build capacity so hiring new employees/contractors will also be a part of this mix.

9. Who will oversee the practices/plans prepared from a quality standpoint?

The practices/plans will need to meet NRCS specifications, so the party signing the agreement will need to ensure proper oversight of the work completed. The arrangement could also be different depending on who signs the agreement.

10. Who is responsible (liable) for quality of work?

Generally, the party that signs the agreement will be responsible just as they are under many other existing similar situations.

11. What training (actual training or funding) is provided for new district hires and for existing district employees doing this work?

Normal training for new hires would be a part of the agreement, as would normal training for existing employees. Again, it will vary depending on the type of work undertaken.

12. What degree of "certification" (and by whom) is required of conservation district employees performing specific technical assistance work (e.g., nutrient management, structural, riparian areas restoration, conservation planning) under these grant agreements?

The degree of certification and job approval authorities will vary depending on the type of work involved, however individuals hired or contracted to perform work will need to demonstrate relevant qualifications. New hires would likely work with guidance from a more experienced employee.

13. What reporting requirements will there be?

The agreement will spell out applicable reporting requirements, but reports would usually be required on a three-month or quarterly basis. NRCS has some specific measures for reporting.

14. Who will submit the requests from each state?

The State/Territory Conservation Partnership will identify their highest priority needs and the state/territory association of conservation districts will submit the application to NACD.



15. What kinds of employees will be eligible?

Employees with the skill sets to assist in meeting the local district's workload will be eligible. These could be new hires, redirected existing employees, part-time, former district, or other conservation employees. In some cases, the district may choose to use a contractor arrangement.

16. Who will be signing the agreements?

NACD's CEO and the individual districts' representative and/or other signatories will sign.

17. Are there any restrictions on what districts can receive these funds?

Any district can receive funds if recommended by their state partnership. Tribal districts are also eligible for funding.

18. How will state proposed districts be approved?

Approvals will be awarded in batches as they are received with attention to parity across the country beginning the week of November 27th.

20. How long will a district have to implement their signed agreement?

Districts will have one year to complete work, starting the day the agreement is signed. NACD will also allow districts an additional month to complete hiring.

21. Can you please take some steps to speed up the process of getting LinkPasses and other access to USDA NRCS tools?

Yes, we have begun identifying ways to help district employees receive access. We recognize this is important not just for this TA agreement, but for all districts that are providing services to customers using USDA tools. We will also offer some suggestions on this topic in the announcement.

22. Is it ok for a district that is already sharing resources such as survey equipment to receive one of these agreements?

Yes.

23. Would a state be able to apply for a block grant of funds from this agreement?

The funds sent to a conservation district will be much like a block grant with a purpose of providing technical assistance to customers. The district will manage the employee(s) and the funds.



24. Would payroll costs be allowed as a part of the agreement?

Yes, normal expenses to hire and support an employee can be included.

25. Some states/territories and districts already have agreements. Is this agreement intended to replace those?

No, these agreements would be supplementary to existing agreements.

26. Will this agreement process be a one-time arrangement or will there be subsequent agreements in future years?

At this time, we have no guarantee of future funding. We do plan, however, to pursue such arrangements in the future if they are productive for the conservation partnership and help conservation districts serve their customers.

27. Will each agreement include TA for planning and TA for EQIP implementation?

Not necessarily. There will be some agreements for EQIP TA only, some for conservation planning TA only, and probably some with both.

28. Will districts in all states and territories receive an agreement?

Ideally, we would like to have agreements with districts in all states and territories. We understand, however, that one or more may decide not to participate. We plan to provide funding to each state/territory proposal for their highest priority submissions.

29. Can these funds be used for translating information materials?

It will depend on the partnership request. We do want to ensure that all customers are served and if there are customers who need materials translated, a reasonable amount of the agreement should be available for such.

30. When would a district receive their funds?

Districts will receive initial funds as soon as the submission is approved to allow for hiring. The remainder of the funds will be furnished as soon as a formal agreement is signed.