



# National Association of Conservation Districts

April 1, 2020

Good morning,

Today, NACD is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for projects that will increase the technical assistance capacity of conservation districts. There is a total of **\$6.5 million** in technical assistance (TA) grant funding available. Like the previous rounds of TA grants, this funding will help conservation districts build capacity and enhance their ability to provide conservation planning and technical assistance to customers. These funds, provided in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), will be administered by NACD to conservation districts in high-priority workload locations across the nation.

Applications from state and territory partnership leaders will be due **by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on June 1, 2020.**

## **Eligibility**

The funds available for the RFP are for newly identified projects. State/territory conservation partnership leaders will identify new projects in high-priority workload locations based on the following criteria:

- The conservation districts' natural resource concerns
- The need for conservation planning at the farm/ranch, district, state/territory, or landscape scale
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) workloads
- Staffing requirements given these planning and CSP workloads

NACD will also work with state leaders on special efforts to link in with additional partners to help augment match funds, partnerships, and other support that can leverage technical assistance grants, including:

- Projects with private sector partners for providing match and/or
- Projects that provide unique partnerships that help advance the overall conservation effort.

Conservation districts and other applicants such as state/territory associations or state/territory conservation agencies are eligible applicants for these funds. For tribal conservation district applications, NACD asks state/territory partnership leaders to inform tribal leaders of this opportunity and advise them to contact NACD Projects and Partnership Coordinator **Meg Leader** at [Meg-Leader@nacdnet.org](mailto:Meg-Leader@nacdnet.org) directly to apply.

## **Available Funding**

Of the \$6.5 million available to conservation districts through this grant opportunity, funds are to be used to either hire new staff, extend the work hours of existing part-time staff or hire contractors. The breakdown of funding available is as follows:

- **\$5,150,000** (80 percent of available funds) is to increase staff capacity to provide conservation operations technical assistance (COTA) planning
- **\$1,350,000** (20 percent of available funds) is to increase access to CSP



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Overall, NACD anticipates about 130 FTE of staff work will be funded through these agreements with conservation districts. Staff costs will vary across the nation given differences in position type and cost of living.

## **Role of the State/Territory Conservation Partnership**

NACD is soliciting applications from all state/territory conservation partnerships for these funds. For most states/territories, these partnerships will include representatives of the state/territory association of conservation districts, NRCS, the state/territory conservation agency, association of conservation district employees and the state/territory's resource conservation and development (RC&D) councils or associations where applicable.

Each state/territory conservation partnership is asked to:

1. Work together to develop a request for funding. In every state and territory, the partnership should review conservation workload data provided by the NRCS state/territory conservationist and the criteria listed in the Eligibility section above to identify high-priority locations.
2. Once high-priority locations are identified, state/territory conservation partnerships are asked to document their request for funding on the [2020 TA Signature Sheet](#). The TA Signature Sheet asks for a ranking of the high-priority locations and the signatures of the state/territory conservation partnership leaders. Once complete, submit the TA Signature Sheet directly to NACD Projects and Partnerships Coordinator [Meg Leader](#) and your NACD regional representative.
3. Reach out to those conservation districts (or other applicants, e.g., state/territory associations or agencies) identified as high-priority on the TA Signature Sheet, and invite them to submit an application to NACD. Online applications should not be completed until a TA Signature Sheet has been submitted to NACD.

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 [2020 National Conservation Partnership MOA](#).

## **Submission Guidelines**

Conservation districts (or other applicants, e.g., state/territory associations or agencies) identified as high priority by their state/conservation partnership and invited to apply for funding must [submit an online application](#) by **11:59 pm Eastern Time on June 1, 2020**. Upon successful completion of the application, applicants will automatically receive an email confirmation with a PDF of the application attached. That PDF will become the Exhibit 1 of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) if the proposal is funded. Applications will be reviewed by NACD's regional representatives for completeness.

Each application for funding requires:

- **A commitment to contribute at least a 20 percent match.** Out of the total budgeted cost of the proposed project, NACD will contribute 80 percent of the funds and the applicant will contribute 20 percent as match funding. Cash or in-kind match will be accepted, as well as a mix of the two.



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- **Accomplishment metrics** (viewable on the application form) with the planned accomplishments filled in for each proposal, e.g. number of contracts, plans assisted and contacts. Some metrics will be applicable to all NACD-district agreements, while others will vary based on the specific work being carried out.
- **A commitment to [file Quarterly Reports on progress by the established deadlines](#)**, including a narrative, financial information and accomplishment metrics. This is an important part of the commitment to receive and use funds and lack of progress reporting could affect future opportunities for funding.
- **A [TA Budget Worksheet to be completed and the submission of concurrence documents](#)** from any individual district where work will occur.

Applications must be [submitted online](#) by **11:59 pm Eastern Time on June 1, 2020**.

## **Evaluation of Applications**

Applications will be evaluated by a National Conservation Partnership review between June 1 - July 31, 2020.

The evaluation will include:

- State/Territory priority rankings
- CSP workload by state
- Completeness of the application
- The source(s) of the match
- For conservation planning funds, a narrative justifying conservation planning needs, including any high-priority situations such as natural disaster recovery areas.

**NACD's goal is to have the \$6.5 million in available funds committed by July 31, 2020.** A payment of the first quarter-year of expenses will be provided to a recipient conservation district shortly after the return of a signed MOA. This payment will help conservation districts/grant recipients begin the hiring process as soon as possible. Once work begins, the remaining agreed-to amount will be advanced in quarterly installments as performance is reported. The agreement holders/signers will be responsible for the completion of the agreed upon work and should complete that work within 13 months. In the case of extenuating circumstances, a time extension may be granted, but conservation districts are asked to use their funds to increase technical assistance capacity in as timely and effective a manner as possible and according to the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed with NACD. Continued regular documentation in Quarterly Reports is required if extenuating circumstances require extending the length of the agreement.

## **Contact Information**

NACD Director of Projects and Partnerships [Rich Duesterhaus](#) and NACD Projects and Partnerships Coordinator [Meg Leader](#) and your NACD regional representative welcome any questions.

- Ariel Rivers, Pacific – [Ariel-Rivers@nacdnet.org](mailto:Ariel-Rivers@nacdnet.org)
- Beth Mason, North Central – [Beth-Mason@nacdnet.org](mailto:Beth-Mason@nacdnet.org)
- Candice Abinanti, Southeast – [Candice-Abinanti@nacdnet.org](mailto:Candice-Abinanti@nacdnet.org)
- Eric Hansen, Northeast – [Eric-Hansen@nacdnet.org](mailto:Eric-Hansen@nacdnet.org)
- Jeff Burwell, Southwest – [Jeff-Burwell@nacdnet.org](mailto:Jeff-Burwell@nacdnet.org)
- Keith Owen, South Central – [Keith-Owen@nacdnet.org](mailto:Keith-Owen@nacdnet.org)



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- Sunni Heikes-Knapton, Northern Plains – [Sunni-Heikes-Knapton@nacdnet.org](mailto:Sunni-Heikes-Knapton@nacdnet.org)

## **Additional Information**

A one-page brief about this project, containing a timeline, is available on [NACD's 2020 Technical Assistance webpage](#), along with a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and a worksheet for preparing prior to submitting your application. These documents may be updated as the application process continues; please consult and review them while preparing applications.

We also will hold a webinar on April 14, 2020 at 2 p.m. Eastern to provide another opportunity for explanations and questions.

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

Sincerely,

Jeremy Peters  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Association of Conservation Districts