



National Association of Conservation Districts

Request for Grant Proposals (RFP) Urban Agriculture Conservation Grants - FY2022

Program Background

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are proud partners in support of the Urban Agriculture Conservation (UAC) Grant Initiative. Since 2016, the Initiative has provided approximately \$5.6 million in competitive grants in support of over 122 projects. More information about the program is [available online](#).

NACD will again award up to \$900,000 in grants to conservation districts in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, ***pending the finalization of funds from NRCS***. Conservation districts—as defined by their state statute—are eligible to apply for funding to address issues of conservation technical assistance related to conservation in urban, community and small-scale agricultural production.

Districts should review NACD's [Board Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity \(DEI\)](#) before applying; proposed projects must include components related to DEI, specifically, outreach to underrepresented communities and traditionally marginalized individuals, workshops or activities focusing on orphan or indigenous crops, the use of non-traditional agricultural practices, partnerships with tribal organizations, etc. Additional information is available in NACD'S [DEI Toolkit](#), and [past grantees](#) provide examples of successful programs incorporating DEI components.

Activities proposed through this RFP must focus on **technical assistance related to agricultural conservation** but can address a variety of community-based approaches, and districts are encouraged to think creatively to support conservation within their communities. The technical assistance may address any natural resource concerns in agriculture, for example, soil health, water quality/quantity issues, biodiversity and habitat improvement, etc. Projects with a focus on food security or sovereignty, food deserts, and other opportunities to connect individuals lacking access to with healthy, fresh food in populated areas are especially encouraged.

Example activities may include (see more information about technical assistance on [NRCS' website](#)):

- The promotion of new or innovative conservation practices to address emerging or ongoing natural resource concerns (soil, water quality and quantity, air, energy, biodiversity)
- Educational and informational workshops and tours highlighting local conservation activities
- Online and virtual trainings, networking events, or other opportunities to share information about agricultural conservation or in development of peer-to-peer communities
- The development of a cultural ambassador program to provide technical assistance in locally relevant languages (other than English) and contexts
- See additional examples of successful projects on [NACD's urban and community webpage](#)

Eligibility

Only conservation districts as defined by state statute and tribal organizations are eligible to receive funding. *Applicants must upload a resolution adopted by the district board, indicating that the board has reviewed and approved the proposal and has addressed any conflicts of interest.*

Previous grantees are not eligible for UAC grants if have previously received two UAC grants; grantees who have only received one grant may apply only if all activities under the first grant are finalized, and a final report for the project is on file with NACD staff.



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Available Funding

New to FY 2022, two funding pools will be available, both of which require a match of 25% from non-federal funding sources.

1. **UAC Planning Grants** (up to \$10,000) and
2. Traditional UAC Grants, to be referred to as **UAC Implementation Grants** (up to \$50,000).

UAC Planning Grants:

Conservation districts may apply for up to \$10,000 and are required to provide 25% matching grant funds, in-kind or cash, from non-federal sources.

These smaller UAC Planning Grants will only be available to **first time UAC conservation district grantees**, for the purposes of early-stage development of a program related to urban or community agricultural conservation. These grants must focus on community needs assessments, partnership development, and building preliminary capacity to begin programming in these areas.

Districts may partner with a consultant or other organization to conduct the early research needed to later implement a full urban agricultural conservation project or program. After completing their planning project, the district should be prepared to address why and what type of technical assistance is needed in their community, how the identified need fits within the context of the district's long-range or strategic plan, who the target audience would be, key organizations for partnerships, and long-term funding sources beyond NACD.

With the successful completion of a planning grant, a district will have the basis to later apply for a UAC implementation grant. However, having received a planning grant does not guarantee that a district will receive an implementation grant; districts with a previous planning grant will be evaluated on a competitive basis compared to all other applications for an implementation grant in the same year.

Districts who already have a strong urban or community agricultural conservation program should not apply for these grants, and instead consider the UAC Implementation Grants. **Rural districts looking to expand into community-oriented agricultural and conservation programs and those from NACD's South Central, Northern Plains, and Southwest Regions are especially encouraged to apply.**

UAC Implementation Grants:

Applicants may request up to \$50,000 and are required to match 25% of the requested funds through in-kind or cash match, from non-federal sources.

The UAC Implementation Grants are open to any conservation district; however, districts who have already received two NACD UAC grants are not eligible to receive a third grant. Previous grantees who have only received one UAC grant are eligible only if they have successfully completed all requirements related to their first grant, with a final report on file with NACD, and if they can document ongoing activity that is not dependent on the NACD UAC grant.

Districts may apply for any type of project focused on technical assistance within a community- or urban focused agricultural context (see example activities above). As part of the application, districts are asked how the grant fits within the context of their long-range or strategic plan; districts who cannot answer this question are encouraged to apply for a UAC Planning Grant instead of a full UAC Implementation Grant.



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At least half of the project budget must support direct technical assistance, to include staff time related to the project, or compensation to others providing the technical assistance (for example, honorariums of speakers or cultural ambassadors). Supplies are an acceptable expense but must be less than 15% of the proposed budget, for example, food, materials, or other necessities for events, signage, seeds, planting, garden beds, or other equipment like shovels.

Grants **may not** be used for large infrastructure, such as the purchase of land or buildings, nor to exclusively hire contractors for the purposes of site preparation or other major renovations needed for an agricultural site. See detailed information about project budgets below, in the Application , and in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for this grant.

Districts are encouraged to work closely with other conservation districts and partners, but we will not accept more than one application for the same project. Specifically, more than one conservation district cannot apply for the same project with the goal of increasing the overall project budget.

At least one Letter of Support from a partner organization is required as part of the application—to indicate support for the project and likelihood that the district will complete it successfully—but also to help indicate how partner organizations may increase the long-term sustainability beyond the term of the NACD grant. Up to 5 letters are accepted as part of the application, and these will be read closely by the evaluation team.

Districts within NACD's South Central, Northern Plains, and Southwest Regions are especially encouraged to apply.

Project Budgets

Districts must provide 25% match from non-federal sources for both types of grants. For additional information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for this grant.

For both grants, applicants may request funds in the following categories, within the limits indicated:

Salary, Benefits, and Honorariums:

These grants are designed to increase district capacity related to urban agriculture conservation, so ensuring district employees have time to carry out the work related to technical assistance should be the primary objective within your proposal. At least 50% of the budget should cover salary, benefits, or honorariums of any staff, cultural ambassadors, or speakers involved in project planning and implementation. Time may include contacting and working with partners, organizing and delivering outreach events, promoting the program and contacting potential community farmers, etc., and any time needed to fill out the reports submitted to NACD. Districts are encouraged to work with cultural ambassadors if they do not have the multicultural or language skills on staff to work with specific, underrepresented, communities and honorariums may be used to compensate those individuals for their time.

Employee Training and Travel Costs:

These funds may cover any training needed to conduct the proposed project activities or to continue the project after the NACD grant. For example, training related to small scale and urban farming and conservation, cultural awareness, community engagement, asset mapping, or other relevant topics. Travel to and from project sites, events, training activities, etc. would also fit in this category.



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Consultant/Contractor: for UAC Implementation Grants, this category must be less than 25% of the funds requested from NACD

Consultants or contractors may support any special outreach needs (for example, curriculum development), site development, planning, etc. that would not fall under the district employee or partner capabilities. For example, you would use this category if you need to hire a contractor to level ground prior to site development.

Supplies, Equipment and Promotion: must be less than 15% of the funds requested from NACD

This category includes any infrastructure or materials needed to conduct the project (signage, printed materials, shovels, irrigation equipment, snacks for events, etc.).

Administrative: must be less than 10% of the funds requested from NACD

Any costs associated with managing the employee dedicated to the project would fall under this category. Examples may include the district manager’s time (discussing activities, providing guidance or mentorship, reviewing timecards), activities related to recruiting or hiring employees, interns or AmeriCorps members, and any time by district finance staff related to financial management.

Grant Timeframe and Sustainability

Grantees will have one year to complete project activities but will be evaluated on how they plan to continue the activities after the grant period. As part of the application districts must show how they will leverage partnerships with neighboring districts and other organizations to achieve the goal of long-term sustainability.

In the application, districts should provide details on other sources of funding or donations that they may seek to continue the program after the NACD grant, or how the grant will contribute to new revenue for the district to become self-sustaining (e.g., through plant of seed sales, fundraising events, fee-for-service programs, etc.). [Funding Resources and Tools for Conservation Districts](#) available on the Members Only Section of NACD’s Website may provide helpful ideas.

Proposal Guidelines and Timeline

Applications will be [accepted online](#) through **January 31, 2022, 11:59 PM Local Time**.

ACTIVITY	TIMELINE
NACD Announcement and Promotion	November 2021 – January 2022
Applicant Proposal Deadline	January 31, 2022
NACD Proposal Review and Selection	January 31 – February 28, 2022
NACD Award Notification and Processing of Agreements	March 2022
Applicant Project Implementation With ongoing reports submitted quarterly	April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

Applicants are encouraged to draft their text prior to starting the [online application](#) (see application questions at the end of the RFP), as applications cannot be saved to return to later. Review the Proposal Evaluation Criteria below prior to drafting the application.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

To ensure full consideration, proposals should address each of these criteria:

- Application provides clear and concise answers to each question.
- Proposals are submitted on behalf of a conservation district as defined by the state’s legislation.



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- Proposals include a resolution adopted by the district board indicating that the board has reviewed and approved the proposal and has addressed any conflicts of interest.
- Project addresses a need for conservation technical assistance for urban or community agriculture. See more information in [USDA National Agriculture Library's resources](#) and [NRCS website on the benefits of technical assistance](#).
- Project addresses additional natural resource and community concerns, for example, outreach to underrepresented populations or areas.
- Proposal indicates that the district has the capacity or will gain the capacity to provide urban and community conservation technical assistance.
- Application details how the project fits within the district's long-range or strategic plan.
- Project incorporates partnership activities with neighboring conservation districts, nonprofits, the private sector, or others.
- Proposal identifies plans for project continuity beyond the grant timeframe (e.g. inclusion in conservation district planning documents, sources of second year funding/in-kind services, etc.).
- If this is a request for a second grant, proposal indicates how the project has continued and operated without NACD UAC grant funds.
- Proposal indicates how the district will promote the project.
- **For UAC Implementation Grants:** At least one letter of support is required from a partner organization detailing how the district and the partner will work together over the long-term. Applicants for the UAC Planning grants may submit letters, but they are not required.

Project Agreements and Reporting Requirements

To receive grant funds, successful applicants must submit a signed 1-year Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), provided by NACD upon announcement of successful proposals. Grantees will then receive a 25% payment to begin project activities, with the remainder of funds disbursed in 25% increments on a quarterly basis.

Beyond the first grant disbursement, districts must show ongoing activity toward project completion by submitting detailed quarterly reports on time. NACD will provide the reporting templates, which districts will use to provide information on project progress and detailed information about expenses.

Applicants must also be willing to be interviewed post-project about ongoing project activities and be willing to be featured in NACD publications, including reports, newsletters and additional media.

Contact Information

Ariel Rivers, Ph.D.

NACD Pacific Region Representative and Urban and Community Staff Lead

(925) 290-8925

Ariel-Rivers@nacdn.org



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Application Instructions

Applicants must apply online by **January 31, 2022, 11:59 PM Local Time**. The application form is available online: [NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant Initiative - 2022 Application](#) and on [NACD's Urban and Community Webpage](#).

Interested applicants are encouraged to read these instructions and prepare their application with required documents well before the deadline. Late applications will not be accepted, and assistance with applications will not be available on the date they are due (January 31, 2022).

The online application includes a combination of questions that applicants must answer directly, as well as places for the district to upload specific files. **To be considered for funding, you must follow these instructions closely, answer each question, and submit all required documents.** Applicants will answer questions 1-2 and 4-9 directly in the online application, and upload documents for questions 3, 10 and 11. For the questions that require you upload a document, please save the file name as indicated in the question, **making sure to include your two-letter state abbreviation code and district name** (e.g., WA-Benton CD).

The required questions and required documents are numbered and italicized below, with additional instructions (including word counts) where indicated. A complete application includes clear and concise answers to each question within the word limits, and documents uploaded with the application. Please note that all questions are required for UAC Implementation Grants, and certain questions are not required for UAC Planning Grants (where indicated).

Districts may contact Ariel Rivers, Ph.D (ariel-rivers@nacdn.org) **well before the deadline** with any questions or issues. Assistance with applications will not be available on the date they are due. Additional information is available online in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for this grant.

Required Questions and Documents:

1. **Applicant Information**

Provide the district name and address, contact person name/phone number/email address

2. **Are you applying on behalf of a conservation district according to your state's legislation?**

If you are not applying for a conservation district, you are not eligible for this grant.

3. **Board Resolution**

Upload a resolution adopted by the district board stating that the board has reviewed and approved the proposal and has addressed potential conflicts of interest.

The file name should include the state and name of the district, saved as: **UAC22-Resolution-State-District**. Example: UAC22-Resolution-WA-Benton CD.

For larger files or to submit a document separately, contact Ariel Rivers, Ph.D. ariel-rivers@nacdn.org. All documents must be received by the application deadline.



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4. **Which UAC Grant are you applying for? – Multiple Choice**

- UAC Planning Grant (Up to \$10,000)
- UAC Implementation Grant (Up to \$50,000)

5. **Project title**

6. **Project description - In 50 words or less**

7. **Total grant amount requested from NACD**

8. **What is your total estimated project budget?**

You requested a specific amount from NACD in question 7. What is the total project budget, including NACD funds and non-federal match for this grant, federal funding sources, and in-kind support?

9. **Is your district a previous UAC grantee? Multiple Choice**

- Yes
- No

10. **Letters of Support**

Upload up to 5 letters of support **as a single document** from potential project partners. Letters are a key factor in evaluation, applicants to the UAC Implementation Grant program should upload at least one letter; letters are encouraged but not required for UAC Planning Grants.

The file name should include the state and name of the district, saved as: **UAC22-Letter-State-District**.
Example: UAC22-Letter-WA-Benton CD.

For larger files or to submit a document separately, contact Ariel Rivers, Ph.D. ariel-rivers@nacdn.org; all documents must be received by the application deadline. Application support is not available the day the applications are due (Jan. 31, 2022).

11. **PROPOSAL UPLOAD**

To be considered for the grant, you must **upload a single document** that addresses each of the following questions within the word limits noted. Applicants for the UAC Implementation Grants must answer every question. For UAC Planning Grants, questions that are not required are indicated.

The file name should include the state and name of the district, saved as: **UAC22-Proposal-State-District**.
Example: UAC22-Proposal-WA-Benton CD.

Districts are encouraged to copy the questions into a new document to ensure they answer each question as indicated. For larger files or to submit a document separately, contact Ariel Rivers, Ph.D. ariel-rivers@nacdn.org; all documents must be received by the application deadline. Application support is not available the day the applications are due (Jan. 31, 2022).



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Information Required in the Proposal (Uploaded):

District Name

Previous Grantees – 200 word limit

If your district is a previous grantee, please provide a 200 word description of previous grant’s accomplishments and how the project has continued beyond the UAC grant time frame. Please also explain how the new activity/service will enhance the initial project, or if the new proposal will begin a separate project. Districts who have previously received two UAC grants are not eligible at this time.

Project Budget

Please complete the following table, double checking your math. These tables are often added incorrectly by applicants, so please make sure the numbers add up correctly.

Category	Funds Requested from NACD	Proposed Match from Non-Federal Sources Must equal at least 25% of the Funds Requested from NACD
Salary, Benefits and Honorariums		
Employee Training and Travel Costs		
Consultant/Contractor Less than 25% of the NACD Budget		
Supplies, Equipment and Promotion Less than 15% of the NACD Budget		
Administrative Less than 10% of the NACD Budget		
TOTAL Please make sure these numbers add up correctly, and that the match equals at least 25% of the NACD Budget!		

Budget Description – 300 word limit

Provide a detailed description (300 word limit) of how the funds will be used, making sure to indicate how the funds will help achieve project goals.

Applicant Qualifications – 200 word limit

Describe the conservation district’s experience and expertise in providing technical assistance in urbanized settings, working with non-traditional partners and engaging communities and citizens. If the experience and/or expertise is limited, describe how district board and staff will prepare for the project implementation. Please describe how the project aligns with the districts’ long-range or strategic plan.

District Capacity - 200 word limit

Describe how this project will enhance the district’s future capacity to provide conservation technical assistance to urban agriculture.



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Detailed Project Description – 1,000 word limit

Describe the community population and location, the potential for community and partners' support, the urban agriculture conservation assistance needs, and how the project will address those needs. Include the additional benefits of the project such as stormwater infiltration, invasive species management, community engagement, participant business skills, etc. Districts are **strongly encouraged** to include demographic data, information from local, state, or national databases on resource concerns or food security metrics, etc.

Geographic Focus – 200 word limit

Please describe how your project will address technical assistance in a specific community. If applicable, please also include any information on outreach to underrepresented areas or populations, and how your project may address food insecurity or food sovereignty. Districts should include any supporting information that clearly identifies specific needs through resource or needs assessments, data available from partners, etc.

Project Goals and Timeline – 200 word limit

This is a one-year initiative running April 2022 to March 2023. List the specific goals of the project along with the proposed timeline for each.

Project Sustainability – 200 word limit

*This question is not required for UAC Planning Grants. Describe how the project will continue after the NACD UAC grant term has ended. Include any expected contributions by partners to help support ongoing project activities. Please describe source of ongoing funds, e.g., district funds or additional grants, and the role the district will play in providing technical assistance beyond the term of the grant.

Project Promotion – 200 word limit

*This question is not required for UAC Planning Grants. Describe how the project will be showcased at the local, state and national level, outside of traditional audiences. Your outreach plan should provide information beyond what you are already doing, and not include only NACD and our publications. Include how the project can be used to encourage/mentor other districts' work in urban agricultural conservation. Please also link to any social media accounts you expect to use to promote the project, if not included elsewhere.