



National Association of Conservation Districts

Request for Grant Proposals (RFP) Urban and Community Conservation Grants - FY2024

Program Background

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are proud partners in support of the Urban and Community Conservation (UAC) Grant Initiative. Since 2016, the Initiative has provided approximately \$7.75 million in competitive grants supporting over 150 agricultural projects. More information about the program is [available online](#).

NACD will again award grants in FY24. Conservation districts—as defined by their state statute—and tribal organizations are eligible to apply for funding to address issues of conservation technical assistance related to conservation in urban, community, and small-scale agricultural production.

These grants are open to any conservation district or tribal organization focusing on conservation within community-oriented agriculture in both urban and rural areas. Rural districts looking to expand into community-oriented agricultural and conservation programs.

Proposed projects should directly contribute to increased food security and/or sovereignty locally, especially for low-income populations, regardless of whether they are in a large metropolitan area or a small town. Applicants should also emphasize outreach to underrepresented communities and traditionally marginalized individuals. The review committee will use this information to closely evaluate applications through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); additional information is available in NACD'S [DEI Toolkit](#), and [past grantees](#) provide examples of successful programs incorporating components of food security/sovereignty and DEI.

Activities proposed through this RFP must focus on **technical assistance related to agricultural conservation** but can address a variety of community-based approaches, and organizations 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, habitat improvement, human components of agriculture, etc. The review committee will prioritize projects focusing on food security or sovereignty, food deserts, and other opportunities to connect individuals lacking access to healthy, fresh food in populated areas.

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 the 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](#)

UAC Eligibility:



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Only **conservation districts** as defined by state statute and **tribal organizations** are eligible to receive funding. Conservation district 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 UAC Grantees:

Previous recipients of **UAC Implementation Grants** are only eligible if they have received only one implementation grant in the last five years (between 2019-2023) and if all activities under the first grant are finalized and NACD staff have a record of a final report for the project on file.

Previous recipients of the **UAC Planning Grants** are eligible to apply in the year immediately following their planning grant, provided they have shown adequate progress and outcomes toward their planning grant, and the implementation grant will support ongoing activities.

Regardless of previous grantee status, all applicants must indicate how they will support their UAC program after the NACD UAC grant period ends.

Districts are encouraged to be active, dues-paying members of NACD. However, this is not a requirement to apply or for selection.

B Available Funding

Two funding pools will be available, both requiring 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 \$60,000).

UAC Planning Grants:

Conservation districts may apply for up to \$10,000 and must 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 apply for a UAC implementation grant later. However, receiving 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.



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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 \$60,000 and must match 25% of the requested funds from non-federal sources through in-kind or cash matches.

Districts may apply for any 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.

At least half of the project budget must support direct technical assistance, including 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 significant renovations needed for an agricultural site. See detailed information about project budgets below 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 the 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, which will be read closely by the evaluation team.

Project Budgets

Districts must provide a 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 and community agriculture conservation, so ensuring district employees have time to carry out the technical assistance work should



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be your proposal's primary objective. 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, contacting potential community farmers, etc., and any time needed to complete 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 into this category.

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 or 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 **April 1, 2024, 11:59 PM Pacific Time**.



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ACTIVITY	TIMELINE
NACD Announcement and Promotion	January 2024 – April 1, 2024
Applicant Proposal Deadline	April 1, 2024
NACD Proposal Review and Selection	May 2024
NACD Award Notification and Processing of Agreements	June 2024
Applicant Project Implementation With ongoing reports submitted quarterly	July 2024 – October 2025

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

The review committee will evaluate all applications based on the following:

- A clear understanding of the grant program, reporting requirements, and project goals, as indicated through concise answers to each application question and supplemental materials.
- How will the project contribute to local food security or sovereignty, and how will the project reach previously underrepresented clients or traditionally marginalized individuals?
- Project addresses a need for conservation technical assistance for community-oriented agriculture.
- Applicant meets all eligibility criteria and provides a resolution from the board indicating support for the project and that the project will not result in conflicts of interest (if applicable).
- Proposals provide detailed information on the project budget and how the funds will be used to achieve project goals, with budgets that do not exceed limits in each category.
- A detailed description of how the project fits within the district's long-range or strategic plan and how the project will continue beyond the grant timeframe.
- Project incorporates partnership activities with neighboring conservation districts, nonprofits, the private sector, local, state, and federal government agencies, or others.
 - **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.
- If this is a request for a second implementation grant, the proposal indicates how the project has continued and operated without NACD UAC grant funds.
- Proposal indicates how the district will promote the project, including to policymakers, the community at large, and others.

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 pending availability of funds.

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



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will use to provide information on project progress and detailed information about expenses. At the completion of the project, grantees must provide a written summary of project activities to be published in NACD's weekly newsletter, 1-2 lessons learned to be published on our website, and photos for continued promotion through publications and reports.

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

Rachel Theler; 719-398-3423

rachel-theler@nacdnet.org



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Application Instructions

Applicants must apply online by **April 1, 2024, 11:59 PM Pacific Time**. The application form is available online: [NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant Initiative - 2024 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 (April 1, 2024).

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.** Applications may be saved and resumed later, but applicants must save their access link as NACD staff will not be able to provide it at a later date. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

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 Rachel Theler (rachel-theler@nacdnet.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.

Application Questions and Documents:

Applicant Information

Applicants are required to provide:

- The name of the applicant organization
- Name and contact info for at least one person
- Address, state, and [NACD region](#) of applicant organization

UAC Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must answer the following questions and upload a document where indicated:

- 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.*
- Upload a 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.*
- Have you read the UAC Frequently Asked Questions Available on NACD's website?
- Is your district a previous UAC Grantee?
- Describe your experience as a previous grantee (if applicable) – 200-word limit



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Basic Grant Information

Applicants must answer the following questions:

- Which UAC Grant are you applying for?
 - UAC Planning Grant (Up to \$10,000)
 - UAC Implementation Grant (Up to \$60,000)
- Project title
- Brief Project Description - *In 50 words or less*
- Expected Agricultural and Conservation Outcomes (select all that apply):
 - Soil - including soil health and erosion
 - Water - including stormwater management and flood control, quality, quantity, or urban specific access issues
 - Plant - including productivity, health, pest management, forest and fire management, native plan conservation and urban tree canopy cover
 - Animal - including habitat and wildlife management, pollinator diversity, and other relevant issues
 - Energy
 - Human Impacts - including food security and sovereignty, impacts to livelihoods or wellbeing, increased access to green space, etc.
 - Other

Project Budget

Applicants must review the information regarding each eligible budget category and the maximum allowable costs. All grants must contribute 25% of the requested funds from NACD in matching funds.

For both NACD Funds and Matching Funds, applicants must provide the dollar amount requested or contributed for each category, respectively:

- Salary, Benefits and Honorariums
- Employee Training and Travel Costs
- Consultant/Contractor – *For NACD funds, must be less than 25% of the requested budget*
- Supplies, Equipment and Promotion – *For NACD funds must be less than 15% of the requested budget*
- Administrative – *For NACD funds must be less than 10% of the requested budget*

Applicants must also provide a detailed description (300-word limit) of how the funds will be used. Indicate sources of match funds and how project activities are tied to the project budget.

Project Proposal

Applicants must provide the following information within the applicable word counts:

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.



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District Capacity - 200-word limit

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

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 16-month initiative running from May 2024 to October 2025. List the project's specific goals 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 the 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.

Supplemental Information:

Letters of Support

The UAC Evaluation Team considers partnerships to be key to the ongoing success of the UAC grants, especially beyond the term of the NACD grant. Supplementary letters of support help indicate how applicants will engage with different partners from the community.

Applicants may upload up to 5 letters of support as a single document from potential project partners.



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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 must include the state and name of the district, saved as: State-District-LOS. Example: WA-Benton CD-LOS.

Additional Documents

Any supplemental materials are not required, but please feel free to share any additional information you feel would benefit your application. For example, site maps, strategic plans, outcomes from needs assessments, etc. **Please make sure the district name is included in the file name.**

For larger files or to submit a document separately, contact Rachel Theler at rachel-theler@nacdnet.org; all documents must be received by the application deadline. Application support is unavailable the day the applications are due (April 1, 2024).