



Frequently Asked Questions | Revised October 5, 2017

1. How much funding is available?

\$9 million - 80% of which will go to support EQIP implementation and 20% 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%. An individual district agreement would require about 20% under these grant agreements, so for example, a \$50,000 agreement will require \$13,000 plus.

- a. Must the match be made in cash or in-kind services? Preferably cash, but both can be used.
- 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 will be developed.
- 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 agreements 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 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. Some of the specific measures for reporting are to be worked out with NRCS as a part of getting NRCS concurrence on a plan of work for the overall project during the next 30 days.

14. Who will submit the requests from each state?

The State/Territory Conservation Partnership will submit their highest priority requests.



15. What kinds of employees will be eligible?

Employees with the skill sets to assist on the workload in the local district 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. When will we have the announcement with deadlines and process information?

We expect to have the final plan of work and the metrics or reporting requirements approved for release in 30 days or less, followed by a national announcement. However, we will begin accepting proposals as soon as state partnerships submit them.

17. Who will be signing the agreements?

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

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

Any district can receive funds if recommended by their state partnership, including tribal districts.

19. How will state proposed districts be approved?

Districts proposed by their state partnership to participate will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis with some monitoring or attention to parity across the country.

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

The plan is for districts to have one year to complete work, starting the day the agreement is signed. So for example, an agreement signed in November 2017 would have until November 2018 for implementation.

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 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?

We have no guarantee at this time 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 assist customers with their technical assistance needs.

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 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 able to be used for such actions.

30. When would a district receive their funds?

Districts will receive initial funds as soon as the submission is approved so that they have funds to begin the employment process. The remainder of their funds will be furnished as soon as they sign a formal agreement.