



National Association of Conservation Districts

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL URBAN AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE FY2020

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
509 CAPITOL COURT NE
WASHINGTON DC 20002**

1. FUNDER BACKGROUND

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the nonprofit organization that represents America's almost 3000 conservation districts¹, their state or territory associations and the elected/appointed officials who serve on their governing boards along with their professional staff.

NACD's mission is to serve conservation districts by providing national leadership and a unified voice for natural resource conservation. Among the goals of the organization are to:

- ✓ Represent conservation districts as their national voice on conservation issues;
- ✓ Analyze programs and policy issues that have an impact on local conservation districts;
- ✓ Build partnerships with federal and state agencies and other organizations in order to carry out conservation district priorities and programs;
- ✓ Provide useful information to conservation districts and their state associations; and
- ✓ Offer needed and cost-effective services to conservation districts.

NACD was founded on the philosophy that conservation decisions should be made at the local level with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. As the national voice for all conservation districts, NACD supports voluntary, incentive-driven natural resource conservation programs that benefit all citizens.

2. INITIATIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Initiative is to increase the capacity to provide agriculture conservation technical assistance in communities where the land use is predominantly developed or developing land. Community health and sustainability will be enhanced by engaging citizens in agricultural conservation initiatives which benefit local residents.

The objective is to provide financial assistance to conservation districts for leadership and support in community agricultural conservation initiatives including technical expertise in project design and natural resource management (e.g. soil health, water quality, invasive species) that result in long-term natural resources protection for urban agricultural production through citizen engagement and partnerships.

According to the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems' May 2014 report on *The Local Food Movement: Setting the Stage for Good Food*, "the local food movement in the United States has evolved over the past 25 years, including a more recent convergence with movements supporting food access and health, food justice, environment, food sovereignty, and racial equity."

Part of this evolution is the rapid expansion of urban agriculture across the nation. 'Urban agriculture' is defined by USDA National Agriculture Library as "taking the form of backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening, community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture and livestock grazing in open space".

In order for urban agriculture to grow sustainably, conservation practices must be incorporated at all levels. This is a vital and viable role for the nation's conservation districts.

This NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Initiative seeks to advance conservation districts' role by providing technical assistance funding for about 18 projects in predominantly developed and developing areas.

The aforementioned MSU report summarized it well by stating “*We have a tremendous opportunity to thoughtfully rebuild a food system by increasing local, good food commerce across all populations, especially those marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, size of business/farm, or economic class. Local food advocates, along with advocates of food access and health, food justice, environment, food sovereignty, and racial equity all must understand and embrace their unique yet interdependent roles in realizing this opportunity.*” Through this Initiative, NACD plans to encourage conservation districts to understand and embrace their role too.

3. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

All of the following sections must be included in each proposal with clear and concise information for the Selection Team. Each category is limited to a 500-word count; any text over that will NOT be read by the Selection Team. Before writing these, applicants should review the Proposal Evaluation Criteria in Section 5.

A. Cover Page

Provide the district name and address, contact person name/phone number/email address, project title, project description in 50 words or less, and grant amount requested.

B. Applicant Eligibility

Only conservation districts¹ as established under their state enabling legislation are eligible to apply for and manage these funds if awarded. Applicants are strongly encouraged to design the project with additional partners in order to ensure long-term sustainability. However, funds cannot be totally subcontracted to one or more other entities.

Those who have received a previous UAC grant from NACD can apply for one additional grant cycle within the following criteria. The initial project must be completed and ongoing in some format to meet the original sustainability requirement. The new proposal will need to include a description of the first project's accomplishments, including metrics. It must also explain how the new activity/service will enhance the initial project and/or begin a separate project.

C. Project Description

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.

D. Geographic Focus

The Initiative is national in scope. Priority will be given to those projects that focus on predominantly developed and developing areas and additional points may be given to those with a special emphasis on underserved² areas including food deserts³.

E. Project Goals and Timeline

This is a one-year initiative running March 2020-February 2021. List the specific goals of the project along with the proposed timeline for each.

F. Project Sustainability

Describe how the project will be continued after the initial grant has ended. Include up to 5 letters of support from potential partners. Proof of the project sustainability is an important criteria.

G. District Capacity

Describe how this project will enhance the district’s ability to provide conservation technical assistance (to urban agriculture) in predominantly developed and developing areas in the future.

H. Project Budget

NACD expects to grant up to \$50,000 each for approximately 18 projects. Budget categories are recommended in the chart below. No more than 15% of the NACD funds can be used for supplies and equipment; this means any outright purchases. No more than 10% of the NACD funds can be used for administrative costs. A match of 25% of the total NACD funds requested is required, including cash and/or in-kind services.

Provide a budget chart that clearly shows how the grant funds will be allocated (sample below). Include a brief explanation for each item. Place a ‘0’ in the line items leaving blank. The amount requested must be totaled.

EXPENSE ITEM	NACD FUNDS	NON-NACD FUNDS AND/OR IN-KIND VALUE FOR 25% MATCH
Salary and Benefits		
Employee Support (training, mileage, etc)		
Consultant/Contractor		
Supplies, Equipment and Promotion (no more than 15%)		
Administrative (no more than 10%)		
Other (explain in detail)		
TOTAL		

I. Applicant Qualifications

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 the conservation district board of directors and staff will prepare for the project implementation. A resolution adopted by the district board must be submitted in writing stating the board has reviewed and approved the proposal and has addressed potential conflicts of interest.

J. Project Promotion

Describe how the project will be showcased at the local, state and national levels. Include how the project can be used to encourage/mentor other districts' work in urban agriculture conservation.

PROPOSAL AND PROJECT TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME
NACD Announcement and Promotion	October-December 2019
Applicant Proposal Deadline	January 10, 2020
NACD Proposal Review and Selection	January 2020
NACD Award Notification and Announcement	February 2020
Applicant Project Implementation	March 2020-February 2021
Applicant Quarterly Reports to NACD	Mar. 1-31, due Apr. 15 Apr. 1-Jun. 30, due Jul. 15 Jul. 1-Sep. 30; due Oct. 15 Oct. 1-Dec. 31; due Jan 15 A final report will be due at the conclusion of the grant period.

4. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

An NACD Selection Team will be appointed to provide for the independent review and evaluation of the proposals.

The Team will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria. To ensure consideration, your proposal should completely meet these criteria:

- ✓ Project provides technical support to conservation aspects of urban agriculture as defined by the USDA National Agriculture Library and stated in the above Initiative Summary.
- ✓ Project addresses additional natural resource and community concerns.
- ✓ Project is designed at conservation district or multi-conservation district level.
- ✓ Proposal is signed off or approved by each involved conservation district board via an adopted resolution. Potential conflicts of interest are acknowledged and addressed according to state requirements.
- ✓ Proposal provides up to 5 letters of community support from an array of partners, especially nontraditional such as private sector and nonprofits.
- ✓ Proposal shows proof of project sustainability (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 shows completion and sustainability of initial project.
- ✓ Proposal shows the capacity of the district to provide urban and community conservation technical assistance will be enhanced.
- ✓ Projects that address the needs of underserved populations provide details as to how this will be done.
- ✓ Proposal demonstrates methods of project visibility and promotion.
- ✓ Information is provided in ALL the sections listed under Proposal Guidelines and within the 500-word count for each.

5. PROJECT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant awardees are required to submit quarterly reports to NACD demonstrating progress on the project and detailing all expenses to date. For uniformity, NACD will provide the quarterly and final report templates at the beginning of the project.

In addition, applicant must be willing to be interviewed post-project (i.e. six months to a year) about the long-term viability.

6. USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN PDF VIA EMAIL BY 11:59PM LOCAL TIME ON JANUARY 10, 2020 TO NACD AT deb-bogar@nacdn.org.

¹As stated in the NACD Bylaws, the term Conservation District shall refer to those entities of state, tribal and U.S. affiliated island governments such as territories, commonwealths and freely associated states in the Caribbean and Pacific Rim established in response to the standard soil conservation districts act originally distributed in 1937. This may also include other entities, such as the District of Columbia, which, in the opinion of the Board of Directors of NACD, have directly evolved from the standard soil conservation district act. These entities may be, known variously as Soil Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Districts, Resource Conservation Districts, or some other name.