



NRCD Program Navigation Services

FACT SHEET FOR PARTNERS & PARTICIPANTS

Compiled by Orleans County NRCD 2024

In the delivery system of Vermont conservation services, Conservation Districts (NRCDs) play a critical initial role in supporting land stewards in entering into a holistic conservation planning process.

Background

All Vermont NRCDs offer program navigation services. In the agricultural sector, some VT NRCDs call this type of service Farm Teams. NRCD staff provide land stewards with one-on-one assistance in accessing resources related to voluntary conservation activities. We provide advice, information, expertise, and tools to help facilitate the maintenance or restoration of the natural resources and to improve the health of the client's land-based operations for the future.

The bulk of the work fits within the Phase 1 of the NRCS Nine Step Conservation Planning process, including the following:

- Conducting site visits to identify problems and opportunities, determine objectives, and conduct initial inventory of the natural resource base, issues, and needs
- Providing program triage that enables land stewards in understanding the best fit and by providing referrals to the appropriate agencies and grant resources
- Facilitating program service coordination, to actively support access to Vermont natural resource programs by providing coordination of technical and financial services with local, state and federal partners on behalf of the client's expressed natural resource goals and needs

The Function of the Conservation District

"To take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus and coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water and related resources." - Pete Nowak, University of Wisconsin 1981

How NRCD's Define Program Navigation

An overarching function of the Conservation Districts is to: *Help land stewards access financial and technical assistance from state, federal, and non-profit partners.*

Specifically, NRCD's describe their role as including the following objectives and tasks:

- Conduct assessments.
- Convene one-on-one meetings to explore options.
- Connect farmers to relevant partners in other agencies.
- Coordinate and facilitate state, local and federal staff for site visits.
- Formally or informally follow a Farm Teams model of service.
- Help clients navigate funding opportunities, i.e., filling out applications, and writing grant applications and letters of support.
- Assist with implementation of programming and projects.
- Act as a liaison with town, state and federal regulators.
- Create and distribute an annual grant guide.

Takeaway for Our Partners

The goal for this fact sheet is to convey to our partners and cooperating landowners the scope of the program navigation services we provide, where we fit into the conservation delivery system, how critical our initial role as facilitator can be, and to solidify our local navigation role.

Specifically, we seek to:

- Share our sense of the most efficient way NRCDs can work in this arena with our partners Increase partner understanding of the work of NRCDs in this arena and let them know who they can refer inquiries to
- Help us all to understand how we can dovetail with each other's roles
- Ensure a good start in building a positive program navigation working relationship with new staff



Orleans County
Natural Resources
Conservation District