

Request for Proposals

Organizational Consultant Services for Northeast Kingdom Conservation District Supervisory Union

RFP & Selection Schedule

5/13/26	RFP released
5/25/26	Questions due
6/1/26	Questions answered
6/8/26	Proposals due
6/17/26	Consultant selected

Summary

The Northeast Kingdom Conservation District Supervisory Union (NEK Supervisory Union) is seeking proposals from qualified organizations to assist the Union in developing and adopting administrative support capabilities that will provide mutual benefit to each district by, at a minimum: increasing communication across the districts; streamlining workflows; minimizing redundancies; and reducing overhead costs. The final product should define the purpose, structure, and operation of the NEK Supervisory Union to best serve its member Districts. The support structure chart provided below depicts how the Supervisory Unions and Conservation Districts fit into the overall Natural Resource Conservation Council (NRCC) structure. This structure consists of a total of six Supervisory Unions made up of the fourteen independent Conservation Districts. These Districts provide support to farmers, forest landowners, municipalities, and community partners in identifying and addressing natural resource concerns, i.e., issues that impair the sustainability or intended use of a resource, by organizing the implementation of locally led solutions. This support structure operates across the entire State of Vermont. This request for proposal focuses only on the NEK Supervisory Union.

Background Information

The Natural Resource Conservation Districts engage farmers, forest landowners, municipalities, and community partners to identify resource concerns and implement locally led solutions. Core programmatic areas include soil health, water quality improvement, nutrient management, erosion control, forest stewardship, and climate resilience. The districts provide technical assistance, education, and project implementation support. Conservation Districts often leverage funding from state and federal partners, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, with whom Conservation Districts maintain a longstanding operational partnership.

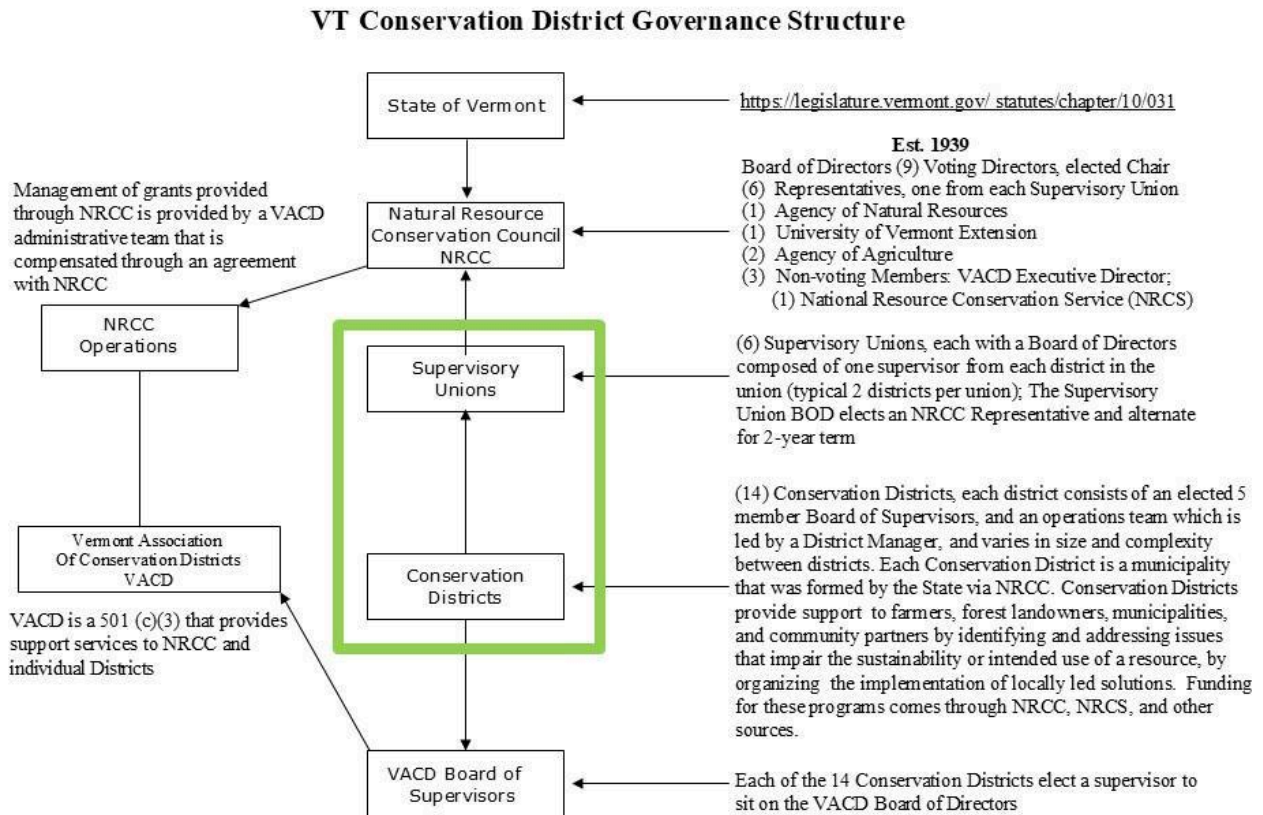
Governance of each Conservation District is vested in a locally based Board of Supervisors composed of elected and appointed members representing the district's geographic and stakeholder diversity. The Northeast Kingdom Conservation District Supervisory Union is one of Vermont's five Natural Resources Conservation District Supervisory Unions, established under the authority of the Vermont Soil Conservation Act of 1939 and overseen by the Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council. Each Union in the state elects a representative to the statewide Natural Resources Conservation Council. The Northeast Kingdom Conservation District Supervisory Union is comprised of the Conservation Districts of Caledonia County, Essex County, and Orleans County. The Northeast Kingdom is a predominantly rural area characterized by working lands, forested landscapes, and headwaters critical to downstream water quality.

The NEK Union is governed by a three-person board which consists of one Supervisor from each District. Each District employs professional staff to deliver programs and manage operations. The Conservation Districts rely heavily on grant-based funding, which has increased in both scale and complexity over the past decade. This growth has enabled expanded services but has also introduced administrative burdens related to compliance, reporting, financial management, and human resources. As currently constructed, each of the three Districts craft their own administrative systems – organizational policies, financial tracking and grant reporting methods, training materials, etc – creating unnecessary redundancy. This work also takes away from staff time needed to achieve conservation goals and can result in weaker systems.

To improve coordination and administrative efficiency, the Conservation Districts in the Northeast Kingdom region are exploring how to improve efficiencies through the Supervisory Union framework. This structure may allow for consolidation of certain administrative functions — such as finance, human resources, grant management, and compliance - but any consolidation must be done in a way that preserves the local governance and autonomy of individual districts. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is intended to explore opportunities to use the Supervisory Union framework to establish

scalable administrative structures with clear roles and responsibilities and a streamlined workflow that can adapt to continued programmatic growth.

This effort builds on prior organizational development work undertaken by Vermont's Conservation Districts and their partners, and aligns with ongoing statewide conversations about governance, statutory modernization, and long-term sustainability of the Conservation District model.



The Northeast Kingdom Supervisory Union consists of three districts. Our goal is to identify and develop new support capabilities at the Union level that will provide mutual benefit to each district's operational team, by increasing communication across the districts, streamlining workflows, minimizing redundancies, and reducing overhead costs.

Tasks

The successful consultant will:

- Review documentation and solicit input from stakeholders to develop a Standard Operating Model for the NEK Supervisory Union including a present & proposed organizational chart for the NEK Supervisory Union; and standard operating

procedures for improved processes, which will cover areas such as governance, technology, and people

- Meet with smaller advisory committee to kick off the project and check in at least one time; meet with each NEK Conservation District board & staff in research phase; present initial findings at annual NEK Tri-District Meeting in September 2026; present findings at final presentation in February 2027
- Based on stakeholder interviews and written documentation of areas for growth created by District Managers, Supervisors, and staff, make recommendations for improved structures, services, roles and responsibilities, and agreements between the Union Conservations Districts that potentially result in streamlining and/or consolidating administrative functions to achieve greater operational efficiency
- Throughout the process, center the knowledge of the District Managers and Conservation District employees

Work Products

- Standard Operating Model for the NEK Supervisory Union including:
 - Present & proposed organizational chart for the NEK Supervisory Union
 - Standard operating procedures for improved processes, which will cover areas such as governance, technology, and people
- Final report and presentation with recommendations

Recommendations can include items such as proposed changes to core organizational documents (bylaws and related policies) and associated hurdles and challenges; organizational charts, workflow charts, changes to scope of services and membership agreements, and a defined decision-making process; and funding model options and strategies, including analysis of cost savings/return on investment.

Timeline

The NEK Union plans to select a consultant in June 2026 and we would like the work to begin immediately. A progress report and feedback session will be presented and facilitated at the Tri-District Meeting in mid-September (date & time TBD). Report completion will be by the end of January 2027. Final presentation to be in February 2027.

Proposal Content

Consultant proposals should include:

- Methodology, process, and timeline to carry out proposed work
- Description of previous organizational development experience
- Names, qualifications, and experience of proposed personnel
- Names and contact information of three previous clients willing to provide references
- Proposed budget

Consultant Preferred Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Experience

- Previous work with nonprofit organizations, preferably associations
- Previous work with boards of directors
- Previous work with workload analysis and organizational design and management systems
- Previous work with process improvement
- Facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes and meetings with a diversity of participants, such as strategic planning and community engagement processes
- Research skills
- Knowledge of administrative structures that support multiple entities
- Familiarity with new technologies that can create efficiencies
- Understanding of nonprofit budgets/income generating models
- Experience working with local/municipal governments ideal

How to Apply

Email proposal in a single PDF to Sam Mayne, Essex County Conservation District Manager (smayne.essexnrcd@gmail.com) by 5:00 pm, Monday, June 8, 2026.

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