

Letter of Intent

Sep 18, 2020

North Dakota State University is pleased to submit an application to:
Environmental Protection Agency / ND Department of Environmental Quality

Title:
North Dakota Soil Conservation District Area Leadership Coordinator Program

Proposed Performance Period: 07/01/2021 - 06/30/2024
NDSU Proposal Reference #: NOV0003956

NDSU Principal Investigator: Aaron Lee Field
Department: Ext Soil Conservation
PI email address: aaron.field@ndsu.edu

Direct Cost: \$451,090.00
Indirect Cost: \$50,121.00
Total Requested US Dollars \$501,211.00
Committed Cost Share in US Dollars: \$334,137.00

This proposal has been institutionally reviewed and approved by the appropriate administrative and programmatic officials. Should this proposal be selected for funding, NDSU reserves the right to negotiate an award with terms and conditions that are appropriate for a public institution of higher education and consistent with NDSU's policies.

NDSU's institutional administrative information is available at
https://www.ndsu.edu/research/for_researchers/proposal_development/institutional_information/ NDSU
DUNS: 80-3882299 NDSU EIN #: 45-6002439

Any award that results from this application should be in the legal name of the North Dakota State University emailed to ndsu.research@ndsu.edu or sent to the address below. Please call 701.231.8045 if further assistance is required. For technical questions, please contact NDSU's PI.

Sincerely,



Award and Program Officer

Project Proposal Summary Sheet

PROJECT TITLE: North Dakota Soil Conservation District Area Leadership Coordinator Program

NOTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY CONTACT PERSON:

Aaron Field

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STATE CONTACT PERSON:

Greg Sandness

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SOIL CONSERVATION DISRICTS AND WATERSHED: Red River Basin, James River Basin, Lower Missouri River Basin, Upper Missouri River Basin, Souris River Basin

PROJECT TYPES: Information/Education

WATERBODY TYPES: Groundwater, lakes/reservoirs, rivers, streams, wetlands

NPS CATEGORY: Other

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Statewide

SUMMARIZATION OF MAJOR GOALS:

The overall goal of this project is to increase the capacity of North Dakota Soil Conservation District Supervisors and employees to lead soil conservation and watershed-based projects that will reduce nonpoint source pollution and protect water quality for future generations.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will continue to develop the leadership skills of Soil Conservation District (SCD) Supervisors and employees and equip them to guide and collaborate with others, apply organizational management skills to engage people in public decisions, and understand how local, state and federal policies impact water resources. In addition, this project will assist these soil and water conservation leaders to recognize soil conservation and watershed challenges through proper assessment practices and the development of attainable solutions. These outcomes will be accomplished by hiring two Area Leadership Coordinators to work with SCDs in North Dakota. These coordinators will provide education and support to Soil Conservation District Supervisors and employees to further their local watershed plans, engage the community, research and pursue grant opportunities, and develop goals that will improve soil health, water quality, and protect the environment for future generations. These Coordinators will utilize organizational coaching techniques such as active listening and critical reflection. They will also assist the SCDs with resource acquisition and help to ensure their actions are implemented with fidelity to their original district plans. A toolkit with best practices will be developed and outline basic coaching practices and serve as a model to help other local boards reach their identified goals.

FY 2020 funds requested: \$501,211

Non-federal match: \$334,137

TOTAL PROJECT COST: \$835,348

2.0 SITUATION

2.1 Soil Conservation Districts in North Dakota provide education and implement land conservation practices to protect water quality, soil productivity, air quality and wildlife habitat. These services are planned and delivered locally, with leadership and participation from community members within the district. The voluntary, locally-led, and locally-delivered conservation activities of these districts are unique and have the potential to reach individual land managers and watersheds that other agencies and organizations cannot.

Individuals serving on local boards, project advisory committees and in professional roles involving soil conservation and water quality management all provide leadership to decisions that are made long-term for Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution management in North Dakota; however, most of these individuals have not participated in formal leadership training. As a step toward improving this skillset, North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension, in partnership with the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (NDSSCC), North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality, and United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), has developed and presented the North Dakota Soil and Water Leadership Academy for the past three years. The Academy is currently presented at two levels and covers topics including conflict navigation, group project planning, community outreach, meeting management, conservation law, and more. These Academies have reached nearly 300 participants representing 51 of the 54 North Dakota Soil Conservation Districts, and participants have reported knowledge and preparedness gains in all aspects of the training.

Although these Academies have been very successful and will be continued, participants and conservation partners have indicated that additional support is needed in many districts to move from a state of readiness to a state of performance. Areas identified for improvement include technical conservation issues such as soil health, water quality, livestock management, and cropping strategies, but are primarily related to conservation planning, communication, policy development, mentorship, public outreach, grant writing, conflict resolution, and facilitation.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 – Goals

The overall goal of this project is to increase the capacity of North Dakota soil and water conservation leaders to develop and implement watershed-based management projects that will improve and protect water quality for future generations. By building capacity, these soil and water conservation leaders will be better equipped to address the three primary goals in the NPS Management Plan of 1) coordinating with the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program and local partners to assess 15 priority

Watersheds, 2) developing and implementing Watershed restoration or protections plans for 15 priority sub-watersheds and 3) increasing public awareness and understanding of water quality.

3.2 Objectives and Tasks

Objective 1: Prioritize two Soil Conservation District Areas to support with Area Leadership Coordinators.

Task 1: Develop a Soil Conservation District Area evaluation matrix based on:

- Supervisor and employee participation in leadership academies and other professional development activities
- Statements and plans of support for Area Leadership Coordinators submitted by Soil Conservation District Area Representatives and Supervisors.
- Availability of qualified candidates for positions in a given Area
- Identified need and potential by partner organizations

Product: Evaluation matrix developed and used to prioritize two Soil Conservation District Areas for added support with Area Leadership Coordinators.

Objective 2: Onboard two Area Leadership Coordinators

Task 2: Collaborate with the NDSU Human Resources Department (NDSU HR), NDSSCC, Area SCD Supervisors, and SCD Employees to review current opportunities and best-practices for the hiring and support of Area Leadership Coordinators, including evaluating the possibility of a sabbatical program for current SCD employees, in which current SCD employees could be hired as Area Leadership Coordinators with the option of returning to their SCD employment at the end of the grant period.

Product: Hiring and support model for new Area Leadership Coordinators.

Task 3: Convene search committee made up of NDSU HR representatives, SSCC, ND DEQ, and NDSU Extension representatives to develop a position description for two Area Leadership Coordinators

Product: Completed Area Leadership Coordinator position description.

Task 4: Hire two Area Leadership Coordinators and provide orientation.

Product: Area Leadership Coordinators strategically placed in two SCD Areas, chosen using the SCD area evaluation matrix from Objective 1.

Objective 3. The two Area Leadership Coordinators will provide follow-up coaching and educational opportunities for area soil conservation Supervisors and employees and assist them in furthering their local watershed plans, engaging the community, developing and reviewing annual conservation plans that will improve soil health, water quality, and protect the environment for future generations. They will also mentor new employees and assist the SCD with resource acquisition and ensure their actions are implemented with fidelity to their original district plans.

Task 5: Local SCD Supervisors and employees will be coached to move from a state of readiness to a state of performance. Site visit coaching will be provided by an Area Leadership Coordinator bi-monthly

throughout the grant period to assist individual Supervisors and staff with project visioning, implementation of district plans, grant writing, public outreach, and communication strategies.

Product: Bi-monthly coaching and continuous support through organizational coaching techniques such as active listening and critical reflection.

Task 6: Weekly educational efforts to update Supervisors and employees on technical issues such as soil health, water quality, livestock management, and cropping strategies as well as grant writing, policy development, public outreach, communication, conflict resolution, mentorship, and facilitation.

Product: Record of training opportunities provided by the Area Leadership Coordinator as well as local or national guest educators.

Objective 4. Formatively evaluate coordinating and coaching efforts for SCD Supervisor and employee behavioral changes.

Task 7: Interview Area Leadership Coordinators six months after start date to determine strategies that are showing success and areas needing improvement. Repeat these interviews twelve months later.

Product: Report with program recommendations and plan for adjustment, shared between both Coordinators.

Task 8: Survey district staff and Supervisors in the area one year after Coordinators are in place. These surveys would identify future program recommendations, an assessment of knowledge gained, and district plan items accomplished.

Product: Report with program recommendations and evidence of knowledge gained as well as district plan items accomplished.

Task 9: Interview conservation partners (Natural Resources Conservation Service, ND Department of Environmental Quality, NDSU Extension Staff, NDSSCC, ND Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Commodity groups, ND Game and Fish Department, et al.) two years after Coordinators are placed to better understand the differences in performance by participating versus non-participating soil conservation areas.

Product: Report evaluating program efficacy and providing recommendations for program improvement.

Objective 5. Curate the experience and knowledge gained by Area Leadership Coordinators during the grant period for future SCD leaders.

Task 10: Create a toolkit to outline best coaching practices, answer frequently asked questions, and serve as a model for SCD Supervisors, employees, and potential additional Area Leadership Coordinators that will help local boards reach their identified goals.

Product: Completed coaching toolkit for future Area Leadership Coordinators, Supervisors, and employees

3.3 Milestone Table – (See Appendix A)

4.0 COORDINATION PLAN

4.1 The NDSU Extension Leadership and Civic Engagement program area will be the lead project sponsor. Responsibilities will include recruitment, onboarding, and supervision of Area Leadership Coordinators. Specialists and administration will convene advisory groups, develop the position description, onboard employees, and provide guidance and supervision. The Area Leadership Coordinators will be employees of NDSU Extension hired on a term appointment and will receive all of the Human Resources training and support that NDSU employees are entitled to.

4.2 Local support will be provided by NDSU Extension specialists who work with leadership and civic engagement programs as well as local Extension agents. Additional support and online resources will be provided by NDSU Extension specialists who work on Soil Conservation and Watershed management technical issues along with Soil Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service offices, SSSC, NDASCD, and ND DEQ.

4.3 The NDSU Extension Leadership and Civic Engagement team responds to local needs by inspiring, equipping and connecting leaders in order to help them solve community challenges through education, local projects and activities. These 319 funds would assist in expanding the current work more specifically to boards and councils directed to address challenging water related issues.

NDSU Extension Leadership and Civic Engagement currently offers a number of programs that demonstrate our ability to manage a program of this type. These include the Soil and Water Conservation Leadership Academy, Rural Leadership North Dakota, Lead Local, and the Community Impressions Program.

The Soil and Water Conservation Leadership Academy (SWCLA) which provides leadership and conservation planning training to North Dakota SCD Supervisors and employees, North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality staff, USDA-NRCS staff, volunteers, students, and other partners across the state. In the past three years, nearly 300 people representing 92% of North Dakota's SCDs have attended these academies. Participants report increased confidence and an improved skillset for leading watershed management projects. Area Leadership Coordinators will assist with the development and delivery of this program.

Rural Leadership North Dakota (RLND) is an 18-month statewide program designed for men and women who are dedicated to strengthening their community and the state of North Dakota for the future. The program involves multiple activities and personal skill development opportunities culminating in a project designed to solve a community challenge. Over \$4 million has been acquired by RLND participants for local projects since 2003, five businesses have been started by RLND alumni employing 19 people, and nine RLND alumni have run for public office.

Lead Local is a new one-day boardsmanship training for emerging, elected and appointed leaders serving on boards, councils and committees. The goal is to help individuals become more civically engaged due to an increase in leadership skills and confidence. Over 130 have participated in a Lead Local training in the past nine months and 91.7% have indicated they feel prepared to serve on a local board, council or committee.

The Community Impressions program inspires, equips and connects leaders from two similar sized North Dakota communities to help them learn about their community strengths and challenges through the

eyes of a first-time visitor. This program has helped build community leaders and solve local problems. CCV staff facilitate the visits and coach communities through this community exchange.

Leadership programs developed and presented by staff at the NDSU Extension Leadership and Civic Engagement have strong ripple effects in the state. These programs offer the opportunity to transform others through appropriate leadership and followership activities so they can in turn make a difference in their communities and organizations.

5.0 EVALUATION AND MONITORING PLAN

5.1 Formative assessment will be performed throughout the grant period and will include a wide range of stakeholders. The Program Coordinator will interview Area Leadership Coordinators six months after their start date to determine strategies that are showing success and areas needing improvement. These interviews will then be repeated twelve months later.

5.2 SCD staff and Supervisors in the area will be surveyed one year after Coordinators are in place. These surveys will identify future program recommendations, assess knowledge gained, and quantify district plan items accomplished.

5.3 NDSU Extension specialists will interview conservation partners (Natural Resources Conservation Service, ND Department of Environmental Quality, NDSU Extension Staff, NDSSCC, ND Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Commodity groups, ND Game and Fish Department, et al.) two years after Coordinators are placed to better understand the differences in performance by participating versus non-participating soil conservation areas.

5.4 NDSU Extension specialists will use data from the District Activity Reporting Tool (DART) to look for changes in district activities before, during, and after the grant period.

5.5 All data gathered during this formative assessment process will be housed on the Leadership and Civic Engagement Director's password-protected computer with back-up files created. Any paper copies of participant's surveys will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

6.0 BUDGET

6.1 (See Appendices B & C)

APPENDIX A. Milestone Table for North Dakota Soil Conservation District Area Leadership Coordinator Program

Objectives	Tasks/Responsible Organizations	Output	2021	2022	2023
Objective 1 - Prioritize two SCD Areas to support with Area Leadership Coordinators	Task 1 - Develop SCD Area evaluation matrix - NDSU Extension with input from NDSSCC, SCDs	Evaluation matrix developed and used to prioritize two Soil Conservation District Areas for added support with Area Leadership Coordinators.	X		
Objective 2 - Onboard two Area Leadership Coordinators	Task 2 - Plan hiring and support of Area Leadership Coordinators - NDSU Extension with input from NDSSCC, SCDs	Hiring and support model for new Area Leadership Coordinators.	X		
	Task 3 - Create position description for Area Leadership Coordinators, NDSU Extension with input from NDSSCC, SCDs	Completed Area Leadership Coordinator position description.	X		
	Task 4 - Hire and orient Area Leadership Coordinators, NDSU Extension with input from NDSSCC, SCDs	Area Leadership Coordinators strategically placed in two SCD Areas.	X	X	
Objective 3 - Follow-up coaching, mentorship, and education by Area Leadership Coordinators	Task 5 - Area Leadership Coordinators coach SCD employees and Supervisors - NDSU Extension	Bi-monthly coaching utilizing organizational coaching techniques such as active listening and critical reflection.		X	X
	Task 6 - Area Leadership Coordinators provide technical education - NDSU Extension	Record of weekly training opportunities provided by the Area Leadership Coordinator as well as local and national guest educators.		X	X
Objective 4 - Formative evaluation of program success	Task 7 - Area Leadership Coordinator interviews - NDSU Extension	Report with program recommendations and plan for adjustment, shared between both Coordinators.		X	X
	Task 8 - SCD staff and Supervisor surveys - NDSU Extension	Report with program recommendations and evidence of knowledge gained as well as district plan items accomplished.		X	X
	Task 9 - Conservation partner interviews - NDSU Extension	Report containing evidence of program efficacy and recommendations for program improvement.			X
Objective 5 - Curate the experience and knowledge gained by Area Leadership Coordinators	Task 10 - Create an Area Leadership Coordinator Toolkit - NDSU Extension	Completed coaching toolkit for future Area Leadership Coordinators.			X

**APPENDIX B. BUDGET TABLE for North Dakota Soil Conservation District Area Leadership Coordinator Program
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024**

FUNDING SOURCES

	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
EPA Section 319 FY 2021 Funds	104,444	195,722	201,044	501,211
State/Local Match 1)NDSU* (TA, FA)	98,680	117,115	118,342	334,137
Total Budget	203,124	312,837	319,386	835,348

TA: Technical Assistance

FA: Financial Assistance

NDSU: North Dakota State University

See Appendix C for additional detail on match sources

Appendix C: BUDGET and NARRATIVE for North Dakota Soil Conservation District Area Leadership Coordinator Program

Budget Item	Budget Narrative	7 /1/21 to 06/31/22	7/1/22 to 06/31/23	7/1/23 to 06/31/24	Total Requested
Salaries & Wages					
Salaries	1.0 for Area Leadership Coordinators (2) - TBD – provide coaching, education, and support to SCD staff and Supervisors.	50,000	103,000	106,090	259,090
Fringe Benefits	55% benefit rate used for all Area Leadership Coordinators	27,500	56,650	58,350	142,500
Total	Total salaries and fringe benefits	77,500	159,650	164,440	401,590
Operating Expense					
Travel	Year 1 – each (2) Area Leadership Coordinator travels to Area SCDs 3-4 times for monthly meetings, project planning, and training (Apx. 3,000 in-state miles for each coordinator at \$0.55 per mile) and to orientation and conferences in Bismarck and Fargo two times each (Apx. 1,500 in-state miles each at \$0.55 per mile). Year 2 – each (2) Area Leadership Coordinator travels to Area SCDs 6-8 times for monthly meetings, project planning, and training (Apx. 9,500 in-state miles for each coordinator at \$0.55 per mile) and to orientation and conferences in Bismarck and Fargo two times each (Apx. 1,500 in-state miles each at \$0.55 per mile). Year 3 – each (2) Area Leadership Coordinator travels to Area SCDs 6-8 times for monthly meetings, project planning, and training (Apx. 9,500 in-state miles for each coordinator at \$0.55 per mile) and to orientation and conferences in Bismarck and Fargo two times each (Apx. 1,500 in-state miles each at \$0.55 per mile).	5,000	12,000	12,000	29,000
Supplies	Year 1 – for each Coordinator: laptop computers for each Coordinator (2 at Apx. \$1700 each), printer and supplies (2 at Apx. \$800 each), supplies for educational programs and workshops (notepads, paper, flip-charts, 2 at Apx. \$1500 each). Year 2 – supplies for educational programs and workshops (notepads, paper, flip-charts, 5 at Apx. \$1500 each), Year 3 – supplies for educational programs and workshops (notepads, paper, flip-charts, 5 at Apx. \$1500 each)	8,000	3,000	3,000	14,000
Postage	Mailing materials and postage for Coordinators (\$250/year per Coordinator)	500	500	500	500
Printing	Printing flyers, booklets, and handbooks. (\$500/year per Coordinator)	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
Operating Fees & Services	Development of brochures, handbooks, and handouts	2,000	0	0	2,000
Total	Total Operating Expense	16,500	16,500	16,500	49,500
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS		94,000	176,150	180,940	451,090
Indirect Costs	Indirect rate calculated at 11.1% of direct costs.	10,444	19,572	20,104	50,121
Total EPA 319 FUNDS	TOTAL PROJECT DOLLARS REQUESTED	104,444	195,722	201,044	501,211

NON-FEDERAL NDSU Matching Funds

Budget Item	Budget Narrative	2021	2022	2023	NDSU Match
Salaries	Program Coordinator (Field) – 50% in year 1 and 65% in years 2-3	35,502	46,613	47,081	129,196
	FCW Program Leader (Flage) – 8% each year	13,413	13,548	13,683	40,644
	Leadership Specialist (Hvidsten) - 6% each year	7,088	7,158	7,265	21,511
	Specialist (Bruns) – 5% each year	3,580	3,616	3,652	10,848
	Extension Agent (Helgoe) – 2% per year	1,077	1,088	1,099	3,264
	Extension Agent (Gress) – 2% per year	940	949	959	2,848
	Extension Agent (Landeis) – 2% per year	1,068	1,079	1,090	3,237
Fringe	46% benefit rate used for Program Coordinator, 33% used for Program Leader, 36% used for Leadership Specialist, 45% used for Specialist, 53% used for Extension Agents	26,144	31,352	31,679	89,175
Indirect costs	F&A (indirect cost) calculated at (11.1%)	9,868	11,712	11,834	33,414
TOTAL NON-Federal	NDSU Matching Funds	<u>98,680</u>	<u>117,115</u>	<u>118,342</u>	<u>334,137</u>

September 23rd, 2020

Aaron Field
NDSU Extension Program Coordinator
Soil and Water Leadership Development
307 Morrill Hall
Fargo ND 58108-6050

Dear Aaron,

On behalf of the North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA), I would like to offer support for NDSU Extension's ND Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program Plan Information and Education Grant proposal to the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality for the program titled ***North Dakota Soil Conservation District Area Leadership Coordinator Program***. We believe it is vital to reduce nonpoint source pollution and protect our water quality for future generations to enjoy.

The North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association understands the potential for this project to further promote leadership development among watershed managers in North Dakota. We understand there are too many instances of harmful algal blooms across the state of North Dakota; as well as too many people that don't understand the implications of such algal blooms. Such instances of nonpoint source pollution will not go away overnight, and this is just one example of the many issues that continue to plague our waters. This project will be a key player in educating North Dakota's watershed leaders and implementing best management practices to improve watershed management and planning in the state of North Dakota, both during and after the grant period. As a conservation organization, we know we can, and we must, do better.

We look forward to seeing the positive impacts of this project and will be happy to offer any assistance and support throughout the grant period.

Sincerely,



Ryan Thorson

President – North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association

District Technician – Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District

701-765-3681

Ryan.thorson@nd.nacdnet.net