The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance on using the ProTracts Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT) to rank applications for funding decisions for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

BACKGROUND
Eligible applications for EQIP and WHIP are given a ranking score based on criteria in the ProTracts AERT (ProTracts Task Guide #3 contains additional information on the evaluation criteria). Applications with the highest ranking score will be given first priority for funding. In the event that multiple applications have the same ranking score but all cannot be funded, the tracking code will be used as a tie-breaker. The application with the highest tracking code will be selected for funding.

LOCATION COUNTY
Applications are ranked based on the location county. When setting the location of an application, the location county must be selected from the drop-down county list (placing the pin in an adjoining county does not properly set the county location).
To ensure that applications are not overlooked in the ranking process, the following steps need to be followed for applications where the location county is in a different administrative area than the servicing office administrative area:

1. District conservationist will send a list to their assistant state conservationist for field operations (ASTC-FO) of applications located outside their administrative area. Include the following information: application number, applicant, location county, and servicing office.

2. The ASTC-FO will compile and send the list of applications located in an adjoining administrative area to the ASTC-FO for that area and courtesy copy the appropriate state office program manager.

3. The program manager will review permissions for the area zone managers (AZMs) in ProTracts to ensure the listed applications can be managed by the appropriate area office.

**TRACKING CODE**

Tracking codes can be assigned by AZMs. When tracking codes are assigned, ProTracts generates a random number. Tracking codes will be used when a tie-breaker is needed during the funding-decision process when applications have equal ranking scores. See ProTracts Task Guide #3 for more information.

**RANKING APPLICATIONS**

The program and financial assistance (FA) fund code of an application will determine the scope of the ranking process (i.e., the group of applications that will compete for a program allocation). Applications can be ranked by state, area, or county by FA fund code. Applications are ranked based on the location county, not the servicing office.

The ProTracts Manage Applications option is used to specify the scope of the application ranking.

**Search Criteria**

On the search screen, select the appropriate criteria to select a group of applications for ranking. The search should also be restricted to applications with Application Status of Eligible. Contract Cost Display Options should be set to Total Cost.

For state or area-wide (administrative area or special resource concern area) rankings; specify Program, Fiscal Year, and FA Fund Code. Click Go to initiate the search.
Example 1: Area-wide ranking

Note: ProTracts permissions also play a role in the search operation. Applications will be restricted based on Servicing Office and County listed in your permissions (use Tools, View Permissions to view your current permissions).

Example 2: Special area ranking

For a county-wide ranking, specify Program, Location, Fiscal Year, and Fund Code. (DO NOT use Servicing Office on a county-wide ranking.) Click Go to initiate the search.
Search Results
Applications meeting the specified search criteria will be displayed sorted by priority, ranking score, and tracking code.

Note: Kansas ranking criteria for 2009 EQIP and WHIP applications does not utilize the Priority field. All applications should have None for Priority.

Use the Cumulative Calculated Cost to determine the funding cut-off. If the cut-off line will split a group of applications that have the same ranking score, the Tracking Code will be used as a tie-breaker.