

# Becoming a Technical Service Provider

## South Dakota Fact Sheet



## What are technical service providers?

Technical Service Providers (TSPs) are conservation professionals from the private sector, non-profit organizations, and public agencies that can provide direct technical assistance and deliver conservation services to landowners and others on behalf of USDA. TSPs can plan, design, install, and certify conservation practices.

## Certification

A certification process is in place to evaluate and approve individuals, entities, and public agencies as TSPs.

To qualify for certification, an individual must:

1. Have the technical training, education, or experience to perform the level of technical assistance for which certification is sought;
2. Meet all applicable licensing or similar qualification standards established by state law;
3. Demonstrate, through documentation of training or experience, familiarity with NRCS specification as set forth in applicable NRCS manuals for the planning and application of specific conservation practices and management systems for which certification is sought; and
4. Not be decertified in any state at the time of application for certification.

In order to be considered for certification as a TSP, an individual must use the NRCS's online registry.

Step 1: Create your USDA verified eAuthentication Account

Step 2: Verify your identity

Step 3: Log into the NRCS Registry

Step 4: Submit your application for review.

NRCS has 60 days to review your application, verify your credentials and samples of work, and make a decision on your certification.

More detailed instructions can be found in the links to the NRCS TSP webpage, field office technical guide, resources, and the NRCS registry website can be found in the More Information section.

If all requirements for certification are met, NRCS will:

1. Enter into a certification agreement and certify the applicant as qualified to provide technical services for a specific category of conservation practices;
2. Place the applicant on the list of approved TSPs when certified; and
3. Make available to the public the list of approved TSPs.

## Training

Training is essential to the successful implementation of the certification process. Individuals interested in becoming certified are responsible for obtaining the training they need to become certified, for keeping their own training records current, and for providing documentation for certification purposes on the training they have received. Costs associated with becoming a TSP, as well as maintaining or renewing certification are the responsibility of the individual seeking certification.

NRCS offers an expansive list of training opportunities for new TSP applicants and

## More Information

- NRCS TSP Webpage: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp/>
- Electronic Field Office Technical Guide: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/>
- Resources for TSPs: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?cid=nrcseprd1417414>
- NRCS Registry website: <https://nrcs.force.com/TSPRegistry>

certified TSPs. NRCS offers courses through the Agriculture Learning Service (AgLearn) and the USDA Science and Technology Library.

All TSP applicants seeking TSP certification to provide technical services to eligible NRCS program participants must also complete the TSP Orientation and Conservation Planning Course and Introduction to Field Office Technical Guide Course.

TSPs are certified for a three-year period and may have their certification renewed for subsequent time periods.

## Quality Assurance

All services provided by TSPs must meet NRCS standards and specifications. The NRCS will only provide payment for services that do. The standards and specifications are available at all NRCS field offices or on the field office technical guide linked in the More Information section.

The NRCS will review, in consultation with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the quality of services provided by TSPs.

TSPs will also assume all legal responsibility for the quality of work they provide. The producer is responsible; however, for complying with the program contract or agreement, which includes meeting USDA technical standards and specifications.

## Reimbursement

TSPs hired by a producer will be reimbursed by the producer from funds obtained through NRCS conservation programs. Not-to-exceed levels of payment for each conservation practice will be determined by NRCS. Payment will only be provided to a producer for technical services obtained from a TSP that has been certified by NRCS to provide those services.

TSPs may also enter into an agreement or contract with NRCS directly. Through cooperative or contribution agreements, NRCS may “bundle” like practices and contract with a TSP to complete these practices for contracts across the state.

