



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

North Dakota

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027



Welcome to the NRCS North Dakota Strategic Plan

Just as a conservation plan helps North Dakota producers implement practices on their farms, a strategic plan guides NRCS in executing its mission effectively. Rooted in our mission to support voluntary conservation efforts, the NRCS Strategic Plan provides a clear path for achieving success across the country. North Dakota's localized goals and objectives are nested within this national framework to ensure our state's unique needs are met while adhering to NRCS's core mission and strategic priorities.

With this guidance, NRCS North Dakota is committed to supporting sustainable agricultural practices while building stronger relationships with producers, ranchers, and partners throughout the state. The following goals and objectives are designed to lead our work through 2027, ensuring NRCS North Dakota continues to optimize its services and enhance the well-being of the land and communities we serve.

NRCS Mission/Vision

Our Mission:

We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.

Our Vision:

A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.



NRCS Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal 1: Apply science-based solutions and technology to improve natural resources through conservation planning and implementation.

- Over the next several years, we will continue to maintain, develop, and review the agency's science-based conservation practice standards and activities, emphasizing broad applicability and intentional removal of identified bias or barriers to adoption. We will continue to address the challenges of climate change by helping our customers build resilience through mitigation and adaptation. Our robust conservation planning process and program funding opportunities will support our continued work with agricultural and forest producers. To better measure and monitor the effectiveness of conservation practices and activities, we will improve the quantification and evaluation methods directly tied to conservation implementation.



Strategic Goal 2: Cultivate the agency's diverse, well-trained, and engaged workforce.

- NRCS's continued success requires us to maintain a high performing, diverse, well trained, and engaged workforce. Through continuous training and career development opportunities, we will develop and maintain staff competency in critical agency priorities and operate with an emphasis on employee health, safety, and wellbeing.

NRCS Strategic Plan Goals

Strategic Goal 1

Apply science-based solutions and technology to improve natural resources through conservation planning and implementation.

Strategic Goal 2

Cultivate the agency's diverse, well-trained, and engaged workforce.

Strategic Goal 3

Advance the agency's high-quality customer experience.

Strategic Goal 4

Foster partnerships that strengthen locally led and tribal land conservation.

Strategic Goal 5

Optimize mission delivery by strengthening organizational health and performance.



Strategic Goal 3: Advance the agency's high-quality customer experience.

- Meeting the needs of our expanding customer base is important to maintaining a high-quality customer experience when implementing conservation solutions. We will continue to increase awareness of the technical and financial assistance opportunities available to all potential customers and we will explore and acquire new technology to improve interactions with our customers. By engaging with potential customers, including those in urban and underserved communities, and listening to their needs, we will receive valuable customer feedback that will help us to eliminate barriers to program participation and improve policies and procedures.

Strategic Goal 4: Foster partnerships that strengthen locally led and tribal land conservation.

- We are committed to maintaining existing partnerships while simultaneously building relationships with new strategic partners to expand engagement with underserved customers and communities. As a Federal

agency, NRCS has fiduciary obligations to protect and maintain the lands, resources, and traditional use areas of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and we must engage in consultations with tribal nations to ensure that tribal needs are understood and incorporated into agency decisions.

Strategic Goal 5: Optimize mission delivery by strengthening organizational health and performance.

- Conducting NRCS business at the highest level requires that we continuously monitor and manage our processes in a healthy and responsible way. We have an obligation to deliver programs and services that are consistent with our mission and to make necessary adjustments as we receive feedback. Ultimately, we must demonstrate and report on the benefits of our conservation efforts through quantifiable outcomes.

NRCS North Dakota Strategic Plan

North Dakota Value Statement

North Dakota NRCS Employees are committed to an atmosphere of teamwork, emphasizing integrity through technical excellence and professional growth in a respectful and positive workplace.

GOAL 1: Optimize voluntary conservation delivery.

Objective 1.1: Create and implement a plan to fill gaps in program delivery by October 1, 2025.

- Utilize State Technical Advisory Committee and EQIP Task Force to identify gaps.
- Engage partners to assist with the identified gaps and recommend solutions.
- Develop NRCS plan to address gaps in education and outreach via the equity tool kit.

Objective 1.2: Evaluate and improve program delivery processes annually.

- Create a CART training cadre to reduce time and improve quality of assessments.
- Reduce pre-obligation errors by 10%.
- Improve practice implementation rate by 5%.

Objective 1.3: Increase voluntary conservation program participation by 10% annually.

- Each Conservation Team Leader (CTL) will implement one activity to target new customers annually.
- Promote nontraditional practices such as urban, energy, and indigenous stewardship practices, through outreach, innovative partnerships, state specific program guidance, and trainings.

Objective 1.4: Collaborate with Local Work Groups (LWGs) and partners to evaluate voluntary conservation outcomes by September 30, 2027.

- Create Local Led Conservation (LLC) and LWG training cadre.
- State will prepare facts sheets for LWGs with relevant data about natural resources in the applicable areas such as wildlife populations, water quality, forest health, etc. and applied conservation practices to include with the LWG process. Partner data will be summarized from ND Game and Fish, ND DEQ (319 program), RCPP projects and monitoring reports, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, Sage Grouse Initiative, Pheasants Forever, Delta Waterfowl.



GOAL 2: Cultivate and maintain a high-performing workforce through engagement, recruitment, and training.

Objective 2.1: Develop and implement targeted, data driven recruitment strategies to meet a 15% hiring increase of new employees annually.

- Analyze Optimal Performing Office (OPO) and other data to determine number, location, and types of positions needed.
- Create a wide spanning list of potential recruitment sources by job series, including the contact person. (LGU, 1890's, Tribal, multi-state)
- Create a calendar of hiring events, identify agency representative(s), and attend recruitment events.

Objective 2.2: Use all hiring and retention authorities available to the Agency for a 15% increase in workforce by September 30, 2027.

- Request approval of retention incentive for existing employees.
- Request approval of a special pay rate for ND.
- Promote tuition reimbursement program to existing and potential employees.
- Utilize all award options to recognize ND NRCS employees. (monetary, non-monetary, and time off)
- Utilize all appropriate hiring authorities. (Pathways, Direct Hire, Schedule A, Veterans Preference, Hiring Incentives, Superior Qualifications, etc.)



Objective 2.3: Develop and implement detailed and all-encompassing statewide training plan to support workforce in acquisition of new skills and improvement of existing competencies by end of September 30, 2027.

- Utilize all sources to ensure trainers are fully competent and able to provide clear training to NRCS staff and partners.
- Utilize appropriate tools (i.e. Career Planner, Training Needs Inventory, core competencies) to ensure appropriate courses are identified, provided, and recorded when completed.
- Provide evaluations for ND courses to all participants to ensure quality of the course is maintained or improved.
- Supervisor and employee will cooperate to ensure learned skills are utilized and reinforced to maximize effectiveness. North Dakota Leadership will schedule and release the dates for state sponsored training session to employees during the first quarter of each fiscal year.

Objective 2.4: Ensure 90% of all staff participate in networking opportunities to enhance professional development annually.

- Supervisors will provide employees opportunities to attend, such as monthly area meetings, statewide all employee meeting, specialist and technical meetings, DC/CTL attend NDASCD annual conference, through in-Person meetings, workshops, out of state trainings, and participation in professional organizations.



GOAL 3: Enhance customer experiences.

Objective 3.1: Continuously identify, analyze, and eliminate barriers to meet customer and partner needs.

- Establish a process to identify and evaluate new technology by March 31, 2025.
- Identify and implement actions to increase capacity for cultural resource reviews through staffing, agreements, contracts, or other process improvements to reduce customer wait time by March 31, 2025.
- Establish process to identify and address barriers to providing service (financial, technical, general, or otherwise) to new and existing customers. Solicit input from Field Office employees, Specialists, and Partners.

Objective 3.2: Engage new, historically underserved, and urban customers to increase awareness of NRCS technical and financial assistance opportunities.

- Require each conservation team to hold at least one event targeted to Historically Underserved, Socially Disadvantaged, Urban, or new customers to improve awareness of NRCS technical and financial assistance each fiscal year.
- Engage the Public Affairs Specialists to develop a marketing and branding plan.
- Utilize Partnerships agreements to engage new and underserved producers and communities.
- State Urban Specialists will meet with at least two urban and/or small-scale agriculture organizations each year to share the NRCS story and available opportunities.



Objective 3.3: Reinvigorate relationships with Tribal nations, and traditional and non-traditional partners to facilitate conservation planning and NRCS program implementation.

- Annual review of North Dakota Outreach Plan by ASTC-Partnerships, Outreach Coordinator, and Public Affairs Specialist to determine accomplishments, needs, and ensure further relationship development.
- Hire State Tribal Liaison by December 31, 2024.
- Establish Tribal Advisory Council by September 30, 2025.
- All Tribal Liaisons and AI/AN SEPM attend ND Tribal Summit.
- All Tribal Liaisons attend Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) annual conference as budget allows.
- Ensure ND NRCS presence at all USDA ONE events (NRCS, FSA, and RD).
- ASTC-Partnerships implement bi-monthly partnership meeting by December 31, 2024.
- Implement Tribal Relations Strategy items that are not previously addressed.

GOAL 4: Improve organizational health and performance for NRCS ND.

Objective 4.1: Establish and implement Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the new operational structure by October 1, 2025.

- Identify and communicate roles and responsibilities for ND NRCS area office staff.
- Develop procedure to evaluate effectiveness of Phase 1.

Objective 4.2: Develop and adopt a system for continual improvement of Human Resources (HR) and business processes to support workforce needs annually.

- Bolster state Food and Agriculture Committee (FAC) meeting functionality.
- Bolster Service Center FAC meeting functionality.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Management and Strategy (M&S) team to address state specific challenges.

Objective 4.3: Promote a culture of accountability by using Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and performance measures for staff annually.

- Utilize results from all review and quality assurance processes to evaluate employee performance.
- Use KPI to establish baseline expectations of employee performance.
- Ensure individual employee accountability by continuous evaluation. (quarterly conversations, etc.)

Objective 4.4: Revise the ND quality assurance process, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, to recognize innovation and avoid risk by January 1, 2025.

- Develop ND Quality Assurance Plan.
 - Develop FO Quality Assurance Review process and schedule.
 - Conduct Civil Rights Reviews.
 - Accessibility: Ensure facilities meet customer needs. (508 compliance, etc.)
 - Ensure Telecommunications are functional.



"These goals and objectives for NRCS North Dakota aim to fulfill our mission of supporting voluntary conservation in ways that are tailored to the unique agricultural landscape and community needs of North Dakota. Through this plan, we will ensure that North Dakota's farmers, ranchers, and partners are well-supported by a high performing, engaged workforce and enhanced program delivery."

- NRCS North Dakota State Conservationist





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