

**NB 300-16-19 LTP – Development of Local Ranking Questions for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT)**

**National Bulletin:** 300-16-19

**Date:** April 12, 2016

**Subject:** LTP - Development of Local Ranking Questions for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT)

**Purpose.** To provide guidance to States to develop the local ranking questions for the 2017-1 General CSP signup.

**Expiration Date.** December 31, 2016

**Background.** The 2014 Farm Bill removed the reference to the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT) in the CSP statute. In order to align more with other financial assistance programs, CSP will use screening worksheets and the AERT to evaluate and rank new and deferred applications beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2017.

**Explanation.** In order to prepare for the 2017-1 General signup, States are encouraged to meet with their local working groups (LWGs) and the State Technical Committee early enough in the year to inform partners of the changes made to CSP and seek their input in the development of the local ranking questions. Outreach materials will be provided through the public affairs division to help States communicate the changes made to the program. Additional actions and guidance are as follows:

1. States will continue to follow State questions (attachment A) and examples of potential local questions (attachment B). States may select from these example local questions or develop their own. Guidance provided in 440-CPM, Part 508, Subpart H, Section 508.73.
2. This bulletin includes draft national and State questions (attachment A) and examples of potential local questions (attachment B). States may select from these example local questions or develop their own.
3. States will select or develop at least one local question for each ranking tool/pool and determine the point values for each question for a total of 150 points.
4. Local questions are to be resource concern based and size neutral.
5. Do not include questions based on NRCS actions. For example, it is not appropriate to include a local question that gives points to an applicant who has a conservation plan already in place.
6. The Landscape Conservation Initiative (LCI) coordinator will provide the local questions for the LCI ranking tools/pools (OAI, LPCI, SGI, LLPI, and MRBI) at a later time. States do not need to develop questions for the LCI.

The CSP Team will provide additional guidance regarding entering the local ranking questions into the AERT once the tool is enabled for CSP.

**Contact.** Questions about this bulletin should be directed to Leah Ricke, CSP Team coordinator, by email at [NRCS-Steward@ftc.usda.gov](mailto:NRCS-Steward@ftc.usda.gov).

/s/

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[Attachment A\\_FY17\\_NHO\\_State\\_AERT](#)

[Attachment B\\_ Example Local Questions](#)