

**Management and Administrative Review Guide  
for  
Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Area Offices**

**Previous Review**

What is the date of the last complete area office (AO) review?

Can the report of the previous review be located and have corrective actions been completed?

**Operations Management**

<b>Planning</b>
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**Workload and Program Assessment**

Have area staff participated in a state workload assessment within the last five years?

**Work Plan or Business Plan**

Does the AO have a business plan? If so, give specific examples of how it addresses national and state priorities.

Are goals/action items specific and measurable?

What specific action items are included in the business plan that address civil rights' responsibilities in program delivery?

Does the business plan include action items to address use of volunteers? If yes, give specific examples.

Are the local operational agreements in the area reviewed annually with the conservation district (CD) boards and documented in board minutes?

<b>Directing</b>
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**Employee Development (Training)**

Do all employees have IDPs in AgLearn?

Are employees actively involved in the preparation of their plans? Have trends and training needs been identified? If yes, how are they tracked and identified?

Is the core curriculum being used to develop training needs? What other methods are used to identify training needs?

Are training needs being identified at staff meetings?

**Scheduling of Duties**

Is a daily work schedule of all personnel in place in the AO? Is it accessible to those with a need to know? Describe the type of schedule that is being used (i.e. Outlook, paper calendar, etc).

How often are AO staff meetings held? Are minutes kept and distributed to staff?

How often are all employees' meetings held? Are state office (SO) employees invited? What topics are covered at all employee meetings?

How often are supervisory district conservationist (SDC)/district conservationist (DC) meetings held? Are SO employees invited? How is the agenda determined?

Is there an area responsibility chart? Is it accessible to all employees in the area?

How are staff assignments tracked to ensure that they are being carried out?

Are AO staff members required to make a specific number of field office (FO) visits each year? Are trip reports required to document field visits?

Does staff have a clear understanding of workload priorities? Does the staff have a system in place to prioritize workload and support personnel and technical needs?

Are the electronic tools and reports from the Program Contracts System (ProTracts) used as a scheduling tool?

## **Evaluating**

### **Management and Administrative Reviews and Quality Assurance Reviews**

Has a Management and Administrative Review been conducted at least once in the last five years in all management units (MUs)?

Has a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) been conducted at least once in the last three years in all MUs? (*Reference: Kansas Quality Assurance Plan*)

How is the scheduling of reviews tracked to ensure that they are carried out regularly (three years for QAR and five years for management reviews)?

What is the process to track corrective actions for the above referenced reviews to ensure they are completed?

Describe how reviews are used as an effective management/training tool?

Is feedback received from the respective SO staffs on follow-up items?

Do reviews completed in MUs indicate any reoccurring agreed-to or recommended items that need to be addressed from the area or state level? What are some examples?

### **Progress Reporting**

Are the reports generated and reviewed from the Performance Results System (PRS) used as a management tool?

Have area and MU goals been entered in PRS?

How does the assistant state conservationist (ASTC) track progress towards completion of goals and what processes are in place to ensure the SDC's are aware of progress towards meeting their goals?

## **Civil Rights – Equal Employment Opportunity and Program Delivery**

### **Civil Rights Reviews**

Has a Civil Rights Review been conducted in each MU at least once in the last five years? How is the scheduling tracked to ensure that reviews are completed each five years?

What is the process to track corrective actions for the civil rights reviews to ensure they are completed?

Is the Kansas Instruction regarding Civil Rights Responsibilities (issued May 3, 2017) being utilized per policy when the local operational agreement is reviewed each year with district boards?

Are civil rights included as a topic at staff meetings?

Do AO employees have an awareness of the Kansas Civil Rights Advisory Committee (KCRAC) functions and membership composition?

Are AO employees encouraged to serve on the KCRAC?

## **Programs**

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) (2-CRP)**  
**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSTP) (CPM 508 – DRAFT)**  
**Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) (CPM515)**  
**Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**  
**Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)**  
**Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**  
**Emergency Watershed Program (EWP)**  
**State Non-Point Source Pollution Control Fund**  
**State Riparian and Wetland Protection Program**  
**State Water Resources Cost-Share Program**

Does the AO staff have a full understanding of NRCS and state programs and is there evidence of effective program delivery in each of the programs?

Is there an understanding of all program purposes and objectives: basic policies, regulations, procedures, and required software (ProTracts)?

How are programs actively marketed and utilized in the area?

How does area staff provide guidance to ensure consistency in program delivery across the area?  
What are some actions that the ASTC-Programs should take to ensure consistency in program delivery across the state?

How are peer reviews conducted in the area to ensure state policy and procedures are being followed?

What follow-up system is used to ensure that Farm Bill contracts are on schedule?

How are ProTracts payment problems being followed up on and monitored by AO personnel?

Is “Fund Manager” being utilized to diagnose and resolve payment problems?

Is the AO receiving timely and useful information from the state office in order to troubleshoot payment problems?

What process is used to ensure annual contract and/or status reviews are being completed when required and do they identify problems and/or potential problems?

Are non-compliance and violation procedures being used and followed?

What tools and/or processes are used to evaluate contract cancellation/termination requests prior to the contracting officer's concurrence or non-concurrence?

Are there local work groups in the area established and are they addressing Farm Bill programs?

What actions does the ASTC-FO take to ensure state and local cost share program technical assistance needs are being met by field staff?

Does the area and field staff have a good understanding of ACEP (WRE & ALE)? What actions has the ASTC-FO taken to ensure that ACEP is actively promoted in the area?

What is the understanding by the ASTC-FO and other appropriate area staff of the EWP Program?

Is the EWP plan on file in the AO? Does the area staff understand the procedure to follow in the event of a potential EWP situation?

### **Plant Materials**

What is the level of understanding of the purpose and function of the plant materials program at the field and AO level?

What is the involvement of the FO and AO in the evaluation of plant materials and/or the development and promotions of plant science technology for conservation purposes?

Is the current Kansas Long-Range Plan for the Plant Materials Program on file in the AO? (Document should be filed as a supplement to the National Plant Materials Manual.)

Do AO employees know the purpose of the Plant Materials Program?

### **Public Law (PL) 566 Watersheds**

What is the understanding by the ASTC-FO and other appropriate area staff of the PL-566 program (Watershed Planning, Watershed Operations, and Watershed Rehabilitation)?

Does the AO staff have an understanding of area-wide or watershed-based planning and addressing resource concerns?

Is there a PL-566 watershed district within the area boundaries?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If NO, skip to next section. If yes, continue.

Does the ASTC-FO have a good working relationship with the active PL-566 watershed district boards within his/her area? How many watershed district board meetings has he/she attended in last year?

Has other area staff (such as area engineer) attended watershed board meetings to provide updates on status of planning and construction within the area?

What steps have been taken to identify potential watershed rehabilitation candidate dams?

### **Soil Survey and Technical Soil Services**

Does soil survey information meet the needs of internal and external customers?

What method is being used to document soil survey problems?

Is soil training being provided to new employees that move to the area? If so, how is training being conducted?

Are the field and area staff familiar with the soils information needs of other partners? If so, what are some of these needs?

Is soils information presented to partners and the public (Soil Health field days, school programs, etc.)? If so, explain.

Are the existing soil interpretations adequate for the purposes of the soil survey?

How often does the field office staff request the services of the resource soil scientist? What kind of assistance is requested?

### **National Resources Inventory (NRI)**

Does the area staff have a good understanding of the NRIs purpose of the inventory? Do they participate in any of the inventory activity?

What quality assurance measures are you using to ensure that NRI data collected at MUs/FOs is accurate and collected objectively?

## **Technology**

### **Field Office Technical Guide**

Is there an understanding of how to provide input to update the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) to meet current needs?

Are AO staff members using the FOTG materials in their FO references?

Does the area have a functioning FOTG review committee?

Is the tracking and evaluation of variances in the General Manual (GM) Title 450, Part KS401.13 being followed?

Is the Technology Transfer Process in GM Title 450, Part 401 being followed?

Are area-generated procedures for technology, spreadsheets, and design technology sound?

### **Conservation Technical Assistance**

How does the AO staff ensure that the conservation planning activities in the field reflect specific resource needs?

Do all employees with planning responsibility have current conservation planning and practice job approval authority? How does the AO track and update this authority?

What is the quality of completed fieldwork as determined by QARs, trip reports, and spot checks?

Is the spot check policy in the GM being followed? (Each FO each year; picked practices by groups [four groups])?

What is the AO staff members' understanding of the Technical Service Providers (TSPs) process?

What TSP activities are being implemented in the area?

Is the AO staff providing oversight and proper guidance to the FO concerning TSP activities?

## **Environmental and Natural Resources**

Is there an understanding of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and NRCS policies and responsibilities related to endangered species, prime agricultural land, wetlands, flood plain, historical, and archaeological significant matters?

Are records for meeting NEPA requirements being maintained?

Are federal laws and policy statements understood and followed in planning the following:

- Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments
- Executive Orders on Flood Plains and Wetlands
- Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)
- USDA policy on land use (9500-3)
- Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

## **Engineering**

Are the corrections and recommendations identified in Class IV and V spot checks being implemented?

Have the spot checks and engineering reviews of the FO work identified shortcoming trends or training needs? Has the AO staff addressed these training needs?

Have area-generated spreadsheets and design technologies been reviewed by an independent professional engineer (another area or state office)?

Are area staff's engineering job approval authority being reviewed and updated every 3 years?

Are there equipment or software needs for the area engineering staff?

## **Administration**

### **Personnel Management**

Are employees assigned duties comparable to those identified in their position descriptions?  
(Reference: GM Title 360, Part 405)

Are position descriptions accurate for all employees?

Do employees and supervisors have copies of current position descriptions?

Do employees and supervisors have copies of full performance/position descriptions for developmental positions?

Is career counseling available to employees?

Are the supervisors conducting career counseling?

Please explain the merit promotion program (qualification requirements, competitive process) and how it is being utilized? (*Reference: GM Title 360, Part 408*)

**Awards Program** (*Reference: GM Title 360, Part 414*)

Is the awards policy reviewed to determine the appropriate type of award prior to a nomination being made?

Please show your tracking of awards documentation. Are they submitted through EmpowHR?

Are award nominations consistent within the area? Who is determining consistency?

Please explain your method of ensuring that proper consideration for all awards is given without regard to race, sex, grade, and series? When was this last discussed with staff?

How do you determine if the awards given are appropriate for the type of achievement?

Are employees aware of keepsake awards and their authority to authorize them? Are employees using them to recognize their peers as appropriate?

**Employee Responsibility and Conduct**

Are employees clearly aware of code of conduct and penalties for violations? Do they know how to access it on-line? (*Reference: GM Title 110, Part 405 and the current employee ethics guide, Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, September 1997 [http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx\\_04/5cfr2635\\_04.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/5cfr2635_04.html)*)

Do employees have access to information about fraud, waste, abuse, and bribery and do they know how to report suspect incidents? (*Reference: GM Title 110, Part 405 and GM Title 130, Part 404 and "The Role of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel" pamphlet <http://www.osc.gov/documents/pubs/oscrole.pdf>*)

How do supervisors deal with employee misconduct? Are supervisors familiar with employee rights to due process? (*Reference: GM Title 110, Part 405*)

Are supervisors aware of administrative grievance systems and exclusions? (*Reference: GM Title 360, Part 412*)

### **Employee Relations**

(These questions are to be asked privately with staff to achieve honest feedback.)

Are you receiving timely and accurate information about programs and issues that involve you from the state and national level?

Is the work environment worker-friendly and family-friendly? Instances?

What working conditions would you like to change?

Do you understand the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counseling and complaint process?

How do you contact an EEO Counselor? (*Reference EEO Poster*)

Do you know what services Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers? Who would you contact to get more information about EAP? Do you know how to contact EAP?

### **Performance Appraisal Worksheet (PAW)** (*Reference: GM Title 360, Part 409*)

Do employees have properly prepared and communicated elements? Are they measurable, relevant, and in control of the employee? Are personal visits scheduled with the employees?

Are PAWs issued within 30 days of the employee being placed in a position or within 90 days of a reporting period?

Are PAWs based on the duties described in the position descriptions?

Are supervisors aware of options available to address poor performers?

Are the results from QARs and Management and Administrative Reviews reflected in the PAW results, documented counseling, and related records?

### **Supervisors' Employee Records**

Does the supervisor maintain a file on each of the employees they supervise? Are periodic counseling notes and conversations regarding training (why requested training was denied, approved training not completed, the student's evaluation of the training, and the trainer's evaluation of the student) or other personnel issues documented in the file?

Do the leave records include advanced leave, annual and sick leave requiring written approval, leave restrictions, documents which support leave approved (extended sick leave, etc.)? (May be filed with time and attendance records)

Is tour of duty bi-weekly work schedule for each employee supervised in writing? (Check to see that KS-PER-45 is on file for all employees) (*Reference: GM Title 360, Section 427.12*)

Have any employees been denied a wage grade increase (WGI)? Is there adequate documentation on file to support the decision? (Any form of documentation is acceptable including handwritten notes so long as they are shared with the employee.) (*Reference: GM Title 360, Section 430.12*)

<b>Administrative Services</b>
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**Procurement**

Do procurement policies allow employees to meet their procurement needs?

Are credit cards available to meet the area needs?

Where are the government credit cards maintained?

Is the cardholder reconciling online through U.S. Bank in accordance with Kansas policy? (*Reference: Departmental Regulation (DR) 5013-6*)

Is all supporting documentation for credit card purchases retained for three years?

Does the staff know their authority to buy?

Are reviews of purchases conducted and documented according to policy? (*Reference: DR 5013-6*)

Are contracting officer's technical representatives (COTRs) designated and training records available for review?

**Personal Property**

Do employees have the necessary equipment to carry out their job duties?

Is automotive equipment maintained properly? Is the vehicle/ATV log being maintained?

Is mileage equalized according to policy? (*Reference: GM Title 120, Part 405*)

Are vehicle keys maintained in a secure place?

Are vehicle credit cards stored securely?

Are other equipment and property maintained as per policy?

Are equipment items being safeguarded?

Is property accountability assigned and maintained?

## **Records Management**

Are records, reports, appropriate e-mails, and forms filed correctly?

Has the AO established the electronic filing system and is it being used?

Are obsolete records and files disposed of in accordance with GM Title 120, Part 408, Records Guide?

Do AO employees know how to access Kansas forms and other forms online?

Are the handbooks and manuals, etc., listed in the GM Title 120, Part 403, available for use? (Some are online while others are still in hard copy form.)

Are all staff members knowledgeable on how to access online directives?

Are action and report due dates being tracked and are deadlines being met?

How are e-mails being handled/filed? (*Reference: GM Title 120, Part 408*)

Are employees aware of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act? (*Reference: GM Title 120, Part 408, Subpart C*).

## **Financial Management**

Are employees recording time correctly in the Web-based Total Cost Accounting System (WebTCAS) and is time recorded daily? (*Randomly select and review two timesheets for each employee. Select a current draft copy also*)

Are WebTCAS monitored on a regular basis?

Are collections (generally by check) for overpayments of various kinds to include jury duty, travel, travel advances, miscellaneous reimbursements, etc. sent promptly to the SO Financial Management Staff (FMS) for processing?

Are appropriate verification and transmission of year-end obligations and payables promptly sent to the paying office (SO FMS)?

Are temporary duty travel vouchers submitted and processed within five days of travel completion? Are they charged to the proper fund?

<b>Safety and Physical</b>
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Is there a copy of the current Emergency Response Plan available to all employees and is it reviewed annually?

Are all fire extinguishers properly serviced? Are they checked monthly and documented?

Are fire exits clearly marked and safety routes adequate?

Are there obvious hazards in the office that need to be corrected?

Are employees aware of policy and procedures to report accidents and injuries? (*Reference: GM Title 360, Part 420, Subpart C*) Are time charges monitored?

Are employees aware of threat assessment and violence prevention procedures?

Have employees that have responsibilities with chemicals received training/guidance relating to hazards associated with chemical and biological work environment hazards? (*Reference: GM Title 360, Section 420.197, Subpart R*)

Are employees with bio-security responsibilities following policies on bio-security? (*Reference: GM Title 130, Part 403, Subpart H*)

What are employee awareness levels of personal safety issues in the workplace? (high, medium, low)

Have employees received personal safety training/guidance?

If employees have access to ATVs and/or UTVs, is there documentation of the required training and required equipment (meaning helmets, goggles, over-ankle boots, etc.) and are they following required safety procedures as per policy?

Are safety topics a routine part of staff meetings?

Are hardhats available for employee when required?

Are fire extinguishers present and securely mounted in each vehicle?

Are there first aid kits in each vehicle?

Is a first aid kit available in the AO?

Is there a record of nuclear gauges stored in the area and is training in the storage, transportation, and use of the gauges properly requested, provided, and documented?

## Area Office Space

Are all required posters properly displayed in the AO? (*Reference: Materials available online at [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ks/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2\\_033255](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ks/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_033255)*)

Does the AO office space meet local needs and, if not, what procedures are being followed to address those needs?

Are employees aware of where the Kansas Joint USDA Service Center Manual and policy is maintained?

Is AO handicapped accessible?

## MARKETING

### Timely and effective use of information to support local natural resource priorities and objectives

Does the AO have a marketing plan to assist field offices and conservation districts to disseminate program information to the general public?

How do information activities support priority natural resource concerns?

Are inventories and evaluations of educational activities coordinated with our partners and other agencies?

How is outreach promoted to the FOs? Do the FOs report to the AO on outreach activities (program and general NRCS awareness to underserved groups, minorities, and women) and where can that information be found? Does the AO keep a 230 file and is it up-to-date? Are measurable results kept?

What are some outreach activities used to disseminate program information and general NRCS awareness to targeted groups (underserved and unrepresented, minorities, and women)? Do the field offices report to the AO? What information is reported and where is it kept at the area office?

Are unique outreach activities (for targeted groups) shared with others in the area through e-mail, DC meetings, or all-personnel meetings? Give examples of some unique activities.

What grassroots organizations and/or community-based organizations are provided program information to help spread program and general NRCS awareness to targeted groups? At the area level? At the field level?

What barriers exist to participation of NRCS programs? If a barrier has been identified, has a plan been developed to deal with the barrier? How is the plan being implemented and how is its success being measured?

### **Relations with Groups**

Are groups provided information keyed to their interest?

What efforts are made to provide information to other groups keyed to their interest?

How is information coordinated with other conservation partners?

Are special groups identified within the area?

### **Conservation Education**

What is the status of conservation youth and school education in the area?

Is assistance provided to collegiate and adult education programs? If so, how is assistance provided?

### **Use of Equipment and Materials (related to Public Affairs)**

Do FO and AO staff use appropriate audiovisual equipment in their information program?

Are bulletin boards and popular publications readily available to the public and neatly displayed?

Is the non-discrimination statement visibly displayed on publications made available to the public?

Is the non-discrimination stamp available?

Is information assistance from the state office adequate?

Is the current news release form with the non-discrimination clause being utilized when presenting information to the local media?

## **Relations**

### **Other Agencies and Units of Government**

Is there a good working relationship with other units of government?

Are all partners with conservation interests being considered in local planning and implementation?

Is there a proactive working relationship between NRCS and the CDs in the area?

Is there a proactive working relationship with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) district director?

Are all employees within the AO knowledgeable and aware of sister agencies' roles and programs?

Does the AO staff have an active working relationship with state agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs)? List examples:

<b>Use of Earth Team Volunteers and Apprentices</b>
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Are volunteers and apprentices utilized to assist with information activities? If not, has a needs assessment for volunteer services been completed with the staff?

Is training provided to volunteers and apprentices so they can assist?

Are volunteer hours accurately being reported in the national volunteer database?

Are volunteers being recognized and rewarded within the guidelines of the Earth Team Volunteer Program?

Is the area volunteer coordinator providing the offices adequate assistance and guidance?

## Information and Technology

<b>Security</b>
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Is equipment and data secured in accordance with policy?

Is the annual Information Technology Security Review current and completed in accordance with policy?

Is adequate assistance provided when requested? Does staff know procedures for obtaining assistance?

Are backups accomplished and maintained as per policy?

Are telecommunications, telephone systems, and LAN/WAN being effectively utilized to conduct business?

Is current software meeting needs?

Is access to agency resources and records in accordance to policy (including computer files) and limited to authorized individuals?

Are computer files and records being maintained properly?

Are computer files purged as needed to prevent overfilling hard drive space?