

Local Working Groups

Helping Set Natural Resource Priorities in Nebraska



What is a Local Working Group?

Local Working Groups serve as an advisory committee to the State Technical Committee, providing recommendations to USDA on local natural resource priorities for conservation activities.

Local Working Groups in Nebraska are organized on Natural Resources District (NRD) boundaries. They meet regularly (typically in late winter/early spring) to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to the State Technical Committee.

Purpose

The Local Working Group responsibilities include:

- Ensure a conservation needs assessment is developed using community stakeholder input.
- Identify program funding needs.
- Identify priority resource concerns and any high-priority areas needing assistance.
- Recommend USDA program application and funding criteria, eligible practices (including limits on practice payments), and payment rates.
- Assist NRCS and the Natural Resources District (NRD) with public outreach and information efforts and training needs.
- Recommend program policy to the State Technical Committee based on resource data.
- Utilize the conservation needs assessment to identify priority resource concerns that can be addressed by USDA programs.
- Forward recommendations to the NRCS designated conservationist or Farm Service Agency county executive director.

Membership

Local Working Group membership should be diverse and focus on agricultural interests and natural resource issues in the area.

Membership of the Local Working Group may include but is not limited to Federal, State, county, Tribal, or local government representatives. Examples of members include:

- Members of Natural Resources District (NRD) boards.
- Members of the county FSA committee and the county executive director or designee.
- Cooperative Extension.
- Members of agricultural groups, environmental organizations, and other agencies carrying out natural resource conservation programs.
- Representatives of American Indian governments.
- State or locally elected or appointed officials.
- Other Federal and State government representatives.

Meetings

Local Working Group meetings are open to the public and will be conducted as an open discussion among members and attendees.



LWG Benefits

- Ensures conservation needs are developed using community stakeholder input.
- Conservation needs are assessed and used to help identify program funding needs and conservation practices at the local level.
- Priority resource concerns and high priority areas needing assistance are identified.
- Recommendations are gathered for USDA conservation program application and funding criteria, eligible practices, and payment rates.
- Multi-county cooperation and partnership building where program funding and priority area proposals cross county boundaries.
- Recommendations for state and national program policy to the State Technical committee are gathered.

Meeting Scheduling

The local working group should meet at least once each year at a time and place designated by the chairperson. Other meetings may be held at the discretion of the chairperson. Meetings will be called by the chairperson whenever there is business that should be brought before the Local Working Group.

Local Working Group meetings are open to the public. Notification must be published at least 14 days prior to the meeting in one or more newspapers, including recommended Tribal publications, to attain the appropriate circulation. Agendas and information must be provided to the Local Working Group members at least 14 days prior to the scheduled meeting. All meeting dates and locations will be posted on the [NRCS Nebraska website](#).

Responsibilities of Natural Resources Districts and NRCS

Natural Resources District:

- Assemble the Local Working Group.
- Set the agenda.
- Conduct the Local Working Group meetings.
- Transmit the Local Working Group's priority area and funding requests to the State Technical Committee.
- Note: Where a Natural Resources District is not present, the NRCS designated conservationist will have these responsibilities.

NRCS Designated Conservationist:

It is the NRCS designated conservationist's responsibility to participate in the Local Working Group and to:

- Encourage other USDA agencies to participate in the Local Working Group.
- Assist with identifying members for the Local Working Group.
- Help identify program priorities and resources available.
- Comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, nondiscrimination statement, and other environmental, civil rights, and cultural resource requirements.
- Support and advise the Local Working Group concerning technical issues, program policies and procedures, and other matters relating to conservation program delivery.
- Perform the responsibilities of the Natural Resources District where an NRD is not present.

Public Participation

Individuals attending the Local Working Group meetings will be given the opportunity to address the Local Working Group members. Opportunity to address non-agenda items will be provided if time allows at the end of the meeting. Presenters are encouraged to provide written records of their comments to the chairperson at the time of the presentation. Written comments may be accepted if provided to the chairperson no later than 14 days after a meeting. The following guidelines will govern meeting discussions:

- The chairperson will lead the discussion.
- Only one person may speak at a time. Every participant should have an opportunity to speak. The chairperson or his/her designee is responsible for recognizing speakers.
- The chairperson, in consultation with those members present, may establish time limits for discussion on individual agenda items.
- Members may be polled but voting on issues is not appropriate.
- The chairperson will defer those agenda items not covered because of time limits to the next meeting.

Summaries for all Local Working Group meetings will be available within 30 calendar days of the meeting and will be filed at the appropriate local NRCS office.

Input to State Technical Committee

Local Working Group recommendations are to be submitted to the State Technical Committee chairperson, the district conservationist (or designated conservationist), or both (as appropriate) within 14 days after a meeting. The designated conservationist will inform the Local Working Group as to the decisions made in response to all Local Working Group recommendations within 90 days. This notification will be made in writing to all Local Working Groups members and made available for the public at the local NRCS office.



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