

# The Process: Steps After Submitting Your Application

*Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*



## “What You Need to Know AFTER Applying for Financial Assistance through NRCS Conservation Programs”

### Introduction

This outline of the NRCS application process covers steps that range from completing an application to implementing the contract and items in between.

### Step 1: Completing the Application

- The NRCS application consists of two parts. The first part is a short questionnaire that requires basic contact information and information on land control. A signature and date authenticates your written interest in the program.
- The second part is a 15-page appendix that details requirements IF the applicant receives a contract. A signature is required only to document receipt.
- Participants should indicate their interest in specific practices when applying.
- Applying for assistance IS NOT guarantee of a contract. If the application is accepted and the applicant declines the contract, there is no financial obligation by either party.**
- Producers will need to work with the Farm Services Agency to complete the Adjusted Gross Income and Highly Erodible Lands/Wetland Conservation forms. FSA assigns the operation a farm and tract number, which is used on the application.

### Step 2: You're Determined Eligible. Now What?

- An NRCS representative will contact you to discuss the program and eligible practices offered. Based on the identified resource concerns, the NRCS planner and you select the practices for your operation and a conservation plan is developed.
- Once NRCS receives its funding allocation, eligible applications will be ranked with all others received before the cut-off date and scored based on the Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART).
- The highest ranked applications will be approved for funding until the money is exhausted.
  - o NRCS will contact you if your application ranks low and is not approved for funding. You may leave your application on file for consideration next year or cancel it.
  - o NRCS will contact you if your application is approved for funding. If you choose to move forward, you will need to make an appointment with NRCS to develop a contract.

**No work can begin until a contract is signed and participant receives approval to move forward.**



## Historically Underserved Farmers

Historically Underserved customers may be eligible for an advance payment for at least 50 percent of the payment rate for each practice. The advance payment must be spent within 90 days of receipt, and the practice must be completed as agreed to on the conservation plan of operations.

Historically Underserved farmers include farmers who are beginning (farming fewer than 10 consecutive years), veteran farmers (beginning farmers who have been honorably discharged within past 10 years), have limited resources and those who are socially disadvantaged farmers (those belonging to racial or ethnic groups that have historically been subjected to prejudice).

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### Additional Information

For additional information on NRCS programs and services, please visit [www.de.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.de.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact your local USDA Service Center.

Sussex County, call  
302-856-3990, ext 3

Kent County, call  
302-741-2600, ext. 3

New Castle County, call  
302-832-3100, ext. 3

## Step 3: Developing and Signing a NRCS Contract

- Based on your conservation plan and discussions with your conservation planner, a contract will be developed.
- The contract will specify all of the expectations for your operation. Once you sign, you agree to a legal bond with USDA.
- A SF-1199A - Direct Deposit form must be filed. The participant must provide their bank account and routing number to receive payments through electronic fund transfer.

## Step 4: Implementing the Contract

The steps vary slightly for implementing a contract with management versus structural practices.

- Steps for Management Practices:
  - o NRCS will give checklists of expectations to the farmer. These include practice standards, job sheets, etc...
  - o Farmer will review and sign all paperwork, and complete all management practices fully.
  - o NRCS will inspect the practice, review and update the plan, and make payment.
  - o After final inspection, farmers can expect payment within 10 business days (barring changes in banking information or entity membership).
- Steps for Vegetative and Structural Practices:
  - o Farmer will need to get bids for the practice(s) and hire the contractor, if applicable.
  - o Participant will contact NRCS before construction begins.
  - o Farmer will collect his receipts (includes contractors). Farmers can include own labor bill, if appropriate.
  - o The landowner will contact NRCS once the project is complete. NRCS will inspect the practice to ensure it meets the standard.
  - o Once approved, the farmer signs the paperwork, and NRCS will process payment. Payment can be expected within 10 business days (barring changes in banking information or entity membership).

