United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP):

Natural Resources Conservation Service

What Is It?

A state-driven, partnership and field-based program to build strong employee-producer relationships and increase employees' knowledge of production agriculture in their local areas.

How Does It Work?

NRCS will match producer volunteers who are passionate about conservation and teaching with field employees who have fewer than three years of experience or who are new to an area. The producers will have an opportunity to mentor the employees through "on-the-land," hands-on learning to help them develop their knowledge of:

Common agricultural practices, equipment, inputs, and other agricultural factors in the local area, including:

- The types of challenges and decisions producers face day to day.
- Local resource problems and concerns.
- How NRCS and local producers address resource problems and concerns.

The program provides the opportunity for mentor producers to engage with mentee employees several times over the course of the program, which lasts 1-1.5 years for each participating employee.

By focusing on field-based, hands-on learning, we aim to accelerate employees' early career development and increase their ability to provide customer service of the highest quality, while also increasing their confidence, connection to their local communities, and their understanding of producers' needs.

Who Is Involved?

There are three main groups of people who are involved in the program:

1. Volunteer producers (mentors) who are passionate about conservation and teaching.
2. NRCS and conservation district employees (mentees) who have fewer than three years of experience or who are new to an area.
3. The NRCS and conservation district employees who supervise participating employees.

What Is the Time Commitment?

The time commitment is minimal. Producer mentors commit to engaging "out on the land" with their mentees a few times each year, at times that are convenient for the mentors.

Who Can Participate?

Producers who are passionate about conservation and teaching, and who agree to provide a safe learning experience for program mentees can be a mentor.

How Can I Get Involved or Learn More?

To get involved or learn more, please reach out to your local District Conservationist.

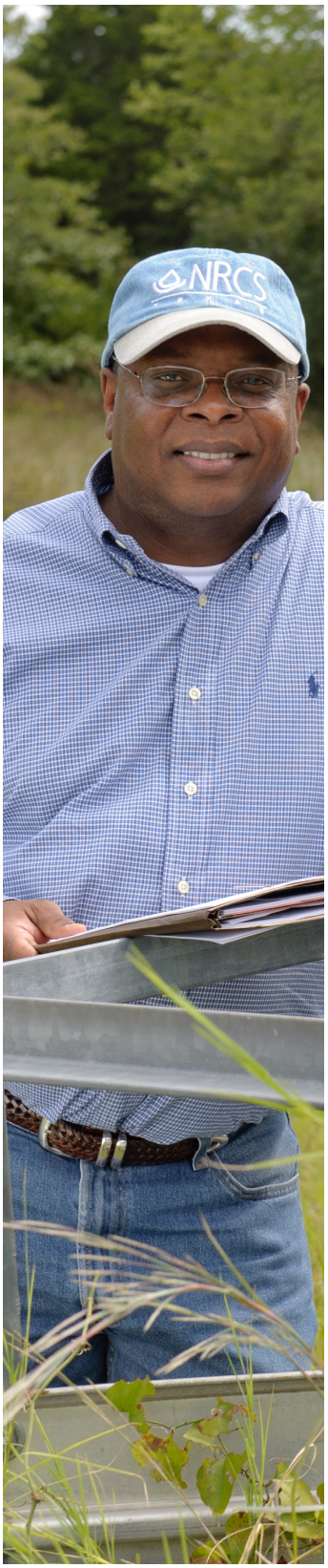
To find your local service center go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/contactstates

What Specifically Will Mentors Do?

Mentors will engage with mentees "out on the land" several times during the year to help them develop their knowledge of local production agriculture.

Specifically, mentors help employees develop their knowledge of:

Production agriculture in their local areas	• Crops and why they're grown there • Seasonality of crop and livestock production cycles (e.g., planting, harvesting, etc.) • Equipment and machinery • Inputs (e.g., chemicals, fertilizers, seed, irrigation, etc.) • Labor and labor issues • Cost considerations (e.g., inputs, leases, loans, equipment, contractors, etc.) • Customer markets and price trends • Risks (e.g., weather, financial, etc.) • Environmental policies and regulations • Stakeholders (e.g., NRCS, FSA, districts, insurance companies, landlords, etc.)
Local resource concerns	• On-land soil, water, air, plant, animal, human, and energy problems (declining ground water, salinity, etc.) • Causes of on-land problems (resource concerns)
How NRCS and producers address local resource concerns	• Appropriate practices for the local area and why those practices are used • Basic costs and benefits of conservation practices • Existing conservation practices on the land and the "story" of those practices



Natural Resources Conservation Service

nrcs.usda.gov/

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. • February 2020