

Technical Service Providers

What do TSPs have to do with NRCS Technical and Financial Assistance?



What are Technical Service Providers?

Technical Service Providers (TSPs) are individuals, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, or public agencies outside of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) who help agricultural producers apply conservation practices on the land. These Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) certified professionals provide for convenient access to technical services, quality work and professional one-on-one technical assistance to landowners or producers who participate in USDA conservation programs.

Technical assistance includes conservation planning and design, layout, installation, and checkout of approved conservation practices.

How Does a TSP Receive Payment?

TSPs must negotiate directly with the producer for the technical services to be provided and their cost. When the technical services are completed the TSP provides the documentation and an invoice to the producer. The producer pays the TSP and provides the information to NRCS. NRCS reimburses the producer based on the not to exceed rates provided within the producer's conservation program contract with USDA. The program payment rates can be viewed under section 1 of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG): <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>.

Agreements between a program participant and a TSP stand alone. They are independent from the conservation contract between a program participant and NRCS. NRCS cannot set the price TSPs charge for their services.

NRCS Specifications

Technical and financial assistance from NRCS is available to private landowners. Technical assistance provides the planning and design work required to support conservation practices for which producers are requesting funding. Each practice must be completed to NRCS conservation practice standards. Success is measured by completing conservation practices, thus the hired TSP certifies the practice to conservation practice standards upon completion. Designated NRCS staff are the only people who can issue a program payment.

TSP Selection Suggestions

A producer should use the same care in selecting a TSP as in choosing any other contractor. The following are suggestions for selecting a TSP:

- Check references and review qualifications. The producer should take care to ensure the TSP understands local conditions and concerns.
- Talk to more than one TSP to ensure they're availability within your time frame, in addition to getting more than one quote.
- Communication skills, experience, and satisfaction of previous clients should also factor into the decision.
- Expect the unexpected. Discuss with the TSP how unexpected events will be handled.
- Discuss which services will be provided by the TSP and which services will be provided by NRCS, other entities, or yourself.
- Establish clear expectations up-front for communication.
- Discuss when and how the TSP will be paid.

To locate a TSP visit the TechReg website: <http://techreg.usda.gov>.



Summary of Responsibilities

The Program Participant:

- Makes planning decisions.
- Ensures landowners of rented land are included in all phases of the project.
- Responsible for selecting the TSP, the TSP must be certified for the practice shown in your plan.
- Inform NRCS you want to use a TSP, provide their name(s) and which practices they will assist.
- Understands their responsibilities in all phases of the USDA program contract, preventing costly delays and misunderstandings.
- Acquires permits and follows federal, state and local laws.
- Provides written consent for NRCS to communicate directly with TSP as needed; NRCS cannot communicate directly with the TSP without written approval.
- Hosts a pre-planning or pre-implementation meeting with NRCS and the TSP.
- Makes payments for work and materials, as incurred.
- Supervises practice installation.
- Continues the three-way communication on all contract related happenings between themselves, NRCS and the TSP.
- Notifies NRCS of project completion and ensures the TSP provides the required documentation for each practice per the NRCS Conservation Practice Statements of Work.
- Is responsible for paying the TSP; you may request that NRCS do an "Assignment of Payment" directly to the TSP by completing a CCC-36 form.
- Is responsible for maintenance of the conservation practice in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications.

The Technical Service Provider (TSP) (hired by the program participant):

- Provides high-quality technical service.
- Complies with all Federal, State, tribal, and local laws and requirements.
- Verifies compliance with specifications for materials prior to project starting.
- Communicates through program participant and/or to NRCS (with approval) whenever planned designs change.
- Certifies that all technical services provided meet NRCS standards and specifications.
- Develops, maintains and provides the producer with the complete documentation for the technical services provided in accordance with the statement of work for each practice.

NRCS

- When NRCS provides planning and/or design assistance we include an explanation of conservation practices and alternatives.
- Communicates with program participant and TSP (with approval) about contract deadlines and technical requirements.
- Completes an administrative review of TSP certification for payment purposes.
- Approves contract payment to program participant(s).

The program participant is ultimately responsible for all conservation practice requirements and should strive for open communication between themselves, NRCS, and the TSP.

