

TSP

USDA Conservation Program Participant Guide to Technical Service Providers



What is a Technical Service Provider (TSP)?

Technical Service Providers are individuals or groups outside of the U.S. Department of Agriculture who are certified to provide technical assistance on behalf of the USDA. Technical assistance includes planning and implementing conservation practices to address natural resource issues.

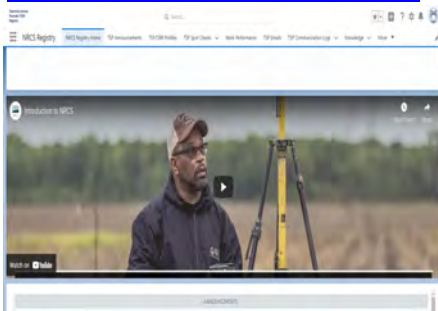
In addition to receiving conservation technical assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or local Conservation Districts, USDA conservation program participants also have the choice of obtaining conservation technical assistance from individuals certified as TSPs. **NRCS now has the ability to reimburse USDA conservation program participants for conservation technical assistance provided by certified TSPs.**

NRCS is committed to ensuring quality technical assistance, whether this service is provided by NRCS or by a TSP. All technical assistance provided by TSPs must meet NRCS standards and policy.

The bottom line – USDA conservation program participants have a choice of conservation technical assistance providers. A USDA customer may choose to work with NRCS conservation professionals, or may call on a TSP registered with NRCS. It's the customer's choice.

NRCS Registry

<https://nrcs-sites.secure.force.com/FindaTSP>



NRCS's new Internet-based Technical Service Provider Registry helps landowners locate and choose certified registered technical service providers who can help them meet their conservation goals.

NRCS Registry also makes it easy for technical service providers to register, become certified, and manage their profile.

How to find a TSP

All of the information needed to locate a TSP is available online at the **NRCS Registry website** <https://nrcs-sites.secure.force.com/FindaTSP>. Using the **Quick Access** menu Click on the state of interest, followed by the county. All TSPs approved to work in the selected county that have registered on NRCS Registry are listed. TSPs can also be selected by choosing the service of interest such as practice code, practice name, practice type and NRCS discipline. TSP resume's are listed with contact information and references.

Using a TSP - The process

TSP reimbursement is currently available only for USDA customers participating in Farm Bill programs, and is limited to available funding. **Provisions for using a TSP must be approved and included in the USDA conservation program contract** – so it is necessary to inform the NRCS if wanting to use a TSP.

The USDA contract is with the conservation program participant, not with the TSP. The program participant is responsible for reaching agreement on cost and terms of assistance for services provided, and with making payment to the TSP. Any costs that exceed the rate in the USDA conservation program contract are also the responsibility of the program participant. When the TSP documents completion of the job, NRCS will reimburse the program participant according to established rates.

Reimbursement Rates

Payments for technical assistance are based on Not-to-Exceed (NTE) rates. NTE rates are available at <https://tspr.sc.egov.usda.gov/ObtainRates.aspx>.

The NTE rate is the maximum amount that will be paid by USDA for technical assistance.

Program participants who have been approved for conservation technical assistance funds will receive a payment of the actual cost of TSP services up to the NTE rate. **The program participant is responsible to pay any charges in excess of the NTE rates.**

Program participants are responsible for obtaining the itemized statement from the TSP listing the charges for services. Participants may choose to have the payment sent directly to the TSP with an assignment of payment.



Things to discuss with local NRCS staff:

- √ How to find a Technical Service Provider
- √ Payment rates
- √ Liability
- √ Case file confidentiality
- √ Assignment of payment to the TSP
- √ Items necessary to submit to NRCS (itemized bills, technical information)
- √ Program participant responsibilities
- √ TSP responsibilities
- √ NRCS responsibilities

The TSP Process

Landowner responsibilities indicated in bold lettering.

1. **Landowner and NRCS work together to select a conservation program that meets the needs of the landowner and the land.**
2. Program and practice eligibility are determined.
3. **Landowner decides whether or not to use a TSP for all or a portion of a conservation practice/system and notifies NRCS.**
4. NRCS modifies or creates the landowner contract based on available funds.
5. **Landowner finds a TSP on the NRCS Registry website at <https://nrcc-sites.secure.force.com/FindaTSP> and to contacts them.**
6. **Landowner works directly with the TSP using details of the conservation plan to negotiate price and contract the work.**
7. TSP performs the work; certifies that the job meets standards and specifications; documents satisfactory completion; and provides landowner will all documentation.
8. **Landowner provides NRCS with an invoice from the TSP and any documentation required to ensure technical services were carried out in accordance with NRCS requirements/specifications.**
9. NRCS authorizes payment and reimburses landowner.
10. **Landowner pays the TSP for services. (Landowners can make arrangements for NRCS's reimbursement payment to go directly to the TSP.)**