



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL  
URBAN AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS  
509 CAPITOL COURT NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20002**

## **1. FUNDER BACKGROUND**

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the nonprofit organization that represents America's almost 3000 conservation districts<sup>1</sup>, their state or territory associations, and the elected/appointed officials who serve on their governing boards along with their professional staff.

NACD's mission is to serve conservation districts by providing national leadership and a unified voice for natural resource conservation. Among the goals of the organization are to:

- ✓ Represent conservation districts as their national voice on conservation issues;
- ✓ Analyze programs and policy issues that have an impact on local conservation districts;
- ✓ Build partnerships with federal and state agencies and other organizations in order to carry out conservation district priorities and programs;
- ✓ Provide useful information to conservation districts and their state associations; and
- ✓ Offer needed and cost-effective services to conservation districts.

NACD was founded on the philosophy that conservation decisions should be made at the local level with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. As the national voice for all conservation districts, NACD supports voluntary, incentive-driven natural resource conservation programs that benefit all citizens.

## **2. INITIATIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this Initiative is to increase the capacity to provide agriculture conservation technical assistance in communities where the land use is predominantly developed or developing land. Community health and sustainability will be enhanced by engaging citizens in agricultural conservation initiatives which benefit local residents with a focus on underserved populations<sup>2</sup> and areas known as food deserts<sup>3</sup>.

The objective is to provide financial assistance to conservation districts for leadership and support in community agricultural conservation initiatives including technical expertise in project design and natural resource management (e.g. soil health, water quality) that result in long-term natural resources protection for urban agricultural production through citizen engagement and partnerships.

According to the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems' May 2014 report on *The Local Food Movement: Setting the Stage for Good Food*, "the local food movement in the United States has evolved over the past 25 years, including a more recent convergence with movements supporting food access and health, food justice, environment, food sovereignty, and racial equity."

Part of this evolution is the rapid expansion of urban agriculture across the nation. 'Urban agriculture' is defined by USDA National Agriculture Library as "taking the form of backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening, community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture and livestock grazing in open space".

In order for urban agriculture to grow sustainably, conservation practices must be incorporated at all levels. This is a vital and viable role for the nation's conservation districts.

This NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Initiative seeks to advance conservation districts' role by providing technical assistance funding for about 20 projects in predominantly developed and developing areas with a special emphasis on underserved areas.

The aforementioned MSU report summarized it well by stating *“We have a tremendous opportunity to thoughtfully rebuild a food system by increasing local, good food commerce across all populations, especially those marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, size of business/farm, or economic class. Local food advocates, along with advocates of food access and health, food justice, environment, food sovereignty, and racial equity all must understand and embrace their unique yet interdependent roles in realizing this opportunity.”* Through this Initiative, NACD plans to encourage conservation districts to understand and embrace their role too.

### **3. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES**

The following sections must be included in each proposal with clear and adequate information for the Selection Team. Before writing these, applicants should review the Proposal Evaluation Criteria in Section 5.

#### **A. Applicant Eligibility**

Only conservation districts<sup>1</sup> as established under their state enabling legislation are eligible to apply for and manage these funds if awarded. Applicants are strongly encouraged to design the project with additional partners in order to ensure long-term sustainability.

#### **B. Project Description**

In 500 words or less, describe the community population and location, the potential for community and partners' support, the urban agriculture conservation assistance needs, and how the project will address those needs. Include the additional benefits of the project such as stormwater infiltration, community engagement, etc.

#### **C. Geographic Focus**

While the Initiative is national in scope, priority will be given to those projects that focus on predominantly developed and developing areas with a special emphasis on underserved<sup>2</sup> areas including food deserts<sup>3</sup>.

#### **D. Project Goals and Timeline**

This is a one-year initiative running August 1, 2016 through July 31, 2017. List the specific goals of the project along with the proposed timeline for each.

#### **E. Project Sustainability**

In 500 words or less, describe how the project will be continued after the initial grant has ended. Include testimonials from the community and up to 5 letters of support from potential partners.

#### **F. Project Budget**

NACD expects to grant up to \$50,000 each for 20 projects. The NACD grant funds can be used for employee salary and benefits, consultants/contractors, and training. No more than

10% of the NACD funds can be used for supplies and equipment. No match is required, but is encouraged. Proof of the project sustainability is a critical criteria.

Provide a budget chart that clearly shows how the grant funds will be allocated (sample below). Include a brief explanation for each item.

EXPENSE ITEM	NACD FUNDS	NON-NACD FUNDS (not required but encouraged)
Salary and Benefits		
Consultant/Contractor		
Training		
Supplies and Equipment (no more than 10%)		
Other		

**G. Applicant Qualifications**

In 500 words or less, describe the conservation district’s experience and expertise in providing technical assistance in urbanized settings, working with non-traditional partners and engaging communities and citizens. If the experience and/or expertise is limited, describe how the conservation district board of directors and staff will prepare for the project implementation.

**H. Project Promotion**

In 500 words or less, describe how the project will be showcased at the local, state and national levels.

**4. PROPOSAL AND PROJECT TIMELINE**

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME
NACD Announcement and Promotion	May 12-June 30, 2016
Applicant Proposal Deadline	June 30, 2016
NACD Proposal Review and Selection	July 1-July 15, 2016
NACD Award Notification and Announcement (written)	July 16-31, 2016
Applicant Project Implementation	August 1, 2016-July 31, 2017
Applicant Quarterly Reports to NACD	November 25, 2016 February 15, 2017 May 15, 2017 August 15, 2017

**5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

An NACD Selection Team will be appointed to provide for the independent review and evaluation of the proposals.

The Team will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria. To ensure consideration, your proposal should completely meet these criteria:

- ✓ Project provides technical support to conservation aspects of urban agriculture as defined by the USDA National Agriculture Library and stated in the above Initiative Summary.

- ✓ Project addresses the needs of underserved populations with details as to how this will be done.
- ✓ Project is designed at conservation district or multi-conservation district level, and signed off or approved by each involved conservation district board.
- ✓ Proposal provides up to 5 letters of community support from an array of partners, especially nontraditional such as private sector and nonprofits.
- ✓ Proposal shows proof of project sustainability (e.g. inclusion in conservation district planning documents, sources of second year funding/in-kind services, etc.).
- ✓ Proposal demonstrates methods of project visibility and promotion.

## **6. PROJECT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Grant awardees are required to submit quarterly reports to NACD demonstrating progress on the project and detailing all expenses to date. For uniformity, NACD will provide the report template at the beginning of the project.

In addition, applicant must be willing to be interviewed post-project (i.e. six months to a year) about the long-term viability.

## **7. USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

**PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN PDF VIA EMAIL BY 12:00PM ON JUNE 30, 2016 TO NACD AT [deb-bogar@nacdnet.org](mailto:deb-bogar@nacdnet.org).**

<sup>1</sup>As stated in the NACD Bylaws, the term Conservation District shall refer to those entities of state, tribal and U.S. affiliated island governments such as territories, commonwealths and freely associated states in the Caribbean and Pacific Rim established in response to the standard soil conservation districts act originally distributed in 1937. This may also include other entities, such as the District of Columbia, which, in the opinion of the Board of Directors of NACD, have directly evolved from the standard soil conservation district act. These entities may be, known variously as Soil Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Districts, Resource Conservation Districts, or some other name.

<sup>2</sup> The traditionally underserved client base reaches across human demographics and includes a diverse group of people who have not traditionally received services from conservation districts and their partners. They may be low-income residents of urban areas or underserved minority agricultural producers. Sometimes they are immigrant or non-English-speaking populations seeking a foothold in rural or urban settings. The traditionally underserved include women operators and landowners, and urban dwellers who find succor in community gardening projects and natural areas preservation. They are children reached with distinctive outreach and education efforts that districts do so well.

<sup>3</sup>While there are many ways to define a food desert, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) Working Group considers a food desert as a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store. To qualify as low-income, census tracts must meet the Treasury Department's New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) program eligibility criteria. Furthermore, to qualify as a food desert tract, at least 33 percent of the tract's population or a minimum of 500 people in the tract must have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store.” An interactive map for food deserts is available at [www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx](http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx).