

Become a Technical Service Provider!

Help Write NRCS Conservation Activity Plans for Transitioning to Organic Farming



CENTER for
RURAL AFFAIRS
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The 2008 Farm Bill authorized a new type of Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), which allows farmers to receive cost share to help them prepare a plan for transitioning land to organic production. The organic Conservation Activity Plan can be written both for farmers who are new to organic and for those who are adding more land to their existing operation.

The farmer must first apply to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for cost share on this activity. If the application is approved, the farmer can hire a Technical Service Provider (TSP) who will write the plan.

Who can be a Technical Service Provider?

Technical Service Providers are individuals, private businesses, nonprofit organizations and public agencies outside of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These people help farmers and ranchers apply conservation practices on the land. To qualify, they must first be approved by the NRCS.

Technical Service providers offer a needed service to farmers wanting to transition to organic. The activity also provides an employment opportunity for those who qualify. Fees for a Technical Service Provider's services are cost shared by the NRCS in the amount of \$1200-\$1800 or more when negotiated with the farmer.

How do you qualify?

The NRCS website – <http://techreg.usda.gov> – lists all approved Technical Service Providers and the technical areas in which they are approved. TSPs are added to the NRCS list after meeting a variety of educational, experience and training criteria. NRCS online training is available at AgLearn – <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov>. Some states require additional classroom training for some topics.

A Technical Service Provider can be approved for one or many different activities including pest management plans, nutrient management plans, grazing plans, and helping farmers implement specific NRCS practices for which they have received cost-share funds. The farmer CANNOT use NRCS funds to pay someone for planning unless that person has gone through the TSP approval process and is specifically listed in a particular state for that activity. Technical Service Provider approval is done state by state, but once you are approved in one state, it is much easier to get approval in adjoining states.

How do I learn more?

Contact **Wyatt Fraas**, Center for Rural Affairs, 402.254.6893 or wyattf@cfra.org or **Harriet Behar**, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, harriet@mosesorganic.org. This information was made possible by the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, www.sare.org/ncsare; the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, www.mosesorganic.org; and the Center for Rural Affairs, www.cfra.org.

