

Conservation Reserve Program Planner Position Request for Quotations Q&A

Q: Task 9 of the RFQ reads, “Planner works towards earning an NRCS Level 3 Certified Planner certificate.” Does this mean NFWF will support and is seeking to train the Contractor for NRCS Level 3 Planner certification? Or does NFWF request a Technical Service Provider who already has this level of certification?

A: This certification is not required. Work conducted under the contract would support an individual working toward the certification.

Q: The timeline indicates the contract will be awarded March 26, 2026, and that the deliverables will be due June 30, 2028. Is there any more granularity that can be provided regarding the deliverables listed? For instance, will site visits to assist landowners be expected to occur year around, or will there be a seasonal cycle to conduct visits?

A: These dates represent the maximum time a contract would last. A contract can last for a shorter period of time if needed. Site visits may happen year-round -- it depends on location and the nature of the site visit.

Q: What is the lead time required for a site visit? In other words, how quickly will the Contractor need to organize a meeting with a landowner after one has been requested? Does conducting this correspondence fall as a duty between the Contractor and the landowner, or will it be facilitated by NRCS staff?

A: Lead time is dependent on the landowner request, and it may be as soon as feasible or delayed due to conditions and/or the landowner preference. In general, if the contractor is the contact with the landowner, they would arrange for the field visit. NRCS staff is available to assist as needed.

Q: How many NRCS staff members in Washington State are currently devoted towards these efforts?

A: Approximately 80.

Q: Are any registered Technical Service Providers required to be considered eligible for this contract?

A: No.

Q: What is the approximate annual volume of CRP contracts/plans? What is the expected frequency of field visits in Washington (specifically Douglas, Grant, Adams, and Lincoln counties)?

A: Workload can vary from year to year. The expiring contract load for FY26 is over 700

contracts expiring with a few hundred that are re-enrolled. Not all of these require a site visit.

Q: Will the Contractor be provided with government-furnished equipment to access NRCS systems, or must we provide IT hardware compliant with USDA security standards?

A: Once the selected contractor completes a background check, they can receive a Lincpass and use the NRCS customer Portal system on their own computer.

Q: Which specific NRCS web-based systems will staff need to access, and what is the typical timeline for provisioning that access?

A: The web-based systems will include the Microsoft 365 office suite of programs, Conservation Desktop, Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool, and ProTracts. The timeline for provisioning access to these programs will be determined once a contractor has been selected.

Q: How is a “complete conservation plan” defined for this project? What does the standard NRCS review and acceptance workflow look like?

A: With regard to CRP, it would be conducting the initial site/field reviews, and then dependent upon what the contract requires (new signup or re-enroll), the planner will enter that information into Conservation Desktop to generate a plan, prepare a map, prepare the implementation requirements, and start the Environmental evaluation. The District Conservationist will review and sign these documents until a planner reaches a level 3 planner certification.

Q: Is the Contractor expected to certify practices directly, or simply provide the documentation required for NRCS certification?

A: More likely they would provide the documentation for NRCS certification, as the contractor is not likely to have Job Approval Authority for typical practices for some time.

Q: Which CRP practices or resource concerns are considered the highest priority in these focus counties? Which ESA-listed species within the focus counties are included in conservation plans?

A: CRP practices focus on either introduced grasses or native grass plantings for addressing soil erosion, or habitat concerns. As with all federal programs, NRCS is required to review all ESA listed species within a planning unit.

Q: Can the Contractor directly schedule site visits and outreach, or must all landowner interaction be coordinated through the local NRCS field offices?

A: The District Conservationist will most likely be directing assignments to the contractor and the needs. The contractor can then directly schedule visits.

Q: Do you have a preferred cadence or template for reporting progress and deliverables?

A: Reporting and deliverables timelines will be negotiated and set once a selected contractor is determined.

Q: Will the Contractor have access to a government motor pool for field visits, or is a personal/company vehicle required?

A: Potential for a government vehicle to be determined post Contractor selection.

Q: Is Level 3 Planner certification required for all staff or only the lead? Additionally, is existing Level 1 or 2 certification a prerequisite for proposed personnel, or can the selected candidate begin the certification process after the contract start date?

A: Selected candidates are not required to have their planner certification in hand at the start of employment. It will be pursued during the regular duties along with any NRCS planner seeking their certification.

Q: Will the "intensive and specialized training" mentioned in the Scope of Work be provided at no cost? Are the hours spent in training considered billable?

A: Yes, work spent conducting necessary components of the SOW are billable.

Q: Is this position remote/telework, or is the Contractor expected to work on-site at a USDA Service Center with a provided workstation?

A: The job location is flexible, however, a presence at the USDA Service Center is encouraged as a means to facilitate training and contact with interested landowners.

Q: Is the funding for this all federal (NRCS) only, or is there a mix of federal/state/private funding incorporated?

A: This contract will be exclusively NRCS-funded.

Q: We do not see a match requirement. Would a match make our SOW more competitive?

A: Match would make the SOW more competitive but is not required.

Q: What is the max award?

A: There is no max award currently set by the funder.

Q: Is this specifically for the Conservation District to hire an additional person, or is this a position that will be working in the NRCS office?

A: It is specifically for the interested and selected party to devote staff time to NRCS work. The new staff could be hired based on the agreement or a result of reallocation of existing staff.

Q: The notice says that the deliverables shall be within Douglas, Grant, Adams, and Lincoln counties. Is Whitman County eligible?

A: Yes, technically eligible, although the focus would be for Adams/Lincoln counties, or Douglas/Grant.