USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HOW TO GET ASSISTANCE

Urban & Small Farms

Iowa NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners – regardless of operation size or setting on the landscape. This fact sheet explains how to get started! The back of this fact sheet lists common conservation practices that help improve soil health, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide other natural resource benefits on your urban or small farm.

Five Steps to Assistance – Get started with NRCS

1. Visit your local NRCS field office to discuss your goals and work with staff on a conservation plan.
2. With the help of the NRCS, complete an application for financial assistance programs.
3. Find out if you're eligible for NRCS's variety of financial assistance programs.
4. NRCS ranks applications according to local resource concerns.
5. Put conservation to work by signing a contract and implementing conservation practices.

1 Planning

To get started with NRCS, we recommend you stop by your local NRCS field office. We'll discuss your vision for your land. NRCS provides landowners with free technical assistance, or advice, for their land. Common technical assistance includes: resource assessment, practice design and resource monitoring. Your conservation planner will help you determine if financial assistance is right for you.

2 Application

We'll walk you through the application process. To get started on applying for financial assistance, we'll work with you to meet eligibility certifications. And work with you on the application, or CPA 1200.
Applications for most programs are accepted on a continuous basis, but they're considered for funding in different ranking periods. Ask your local NRCS staff about deadline for ranking periods.

3 Eligibility

As part of the application process, we will check to see if you are eligible. You'll need to bring:

- Tax ID (Social Security number or employer ID)
- A property deed or lease agreement to show you have control of the property; and
- A farm tract number

You can get a farm tract from USDA's Farm Service Agency. Typically, the FSA office is co-located with the local NRCS office. You only need a farm tract number if you're interested in financial assistance.

4 Ranking

NRCS will look at the apps and rank them according to local resource concerns, amount of conservation benefit the work will provide, and needs of applicants.

5 Implementing

If you're selected, you choose whether to sign the contract for the work to be done. You'll be provided standards and specifications for completing the practice(s), and you will have a specified amount of time to implement. Once the work is implemented and inspected, you'll be paid the rate of compensation if the work meets NRCS standards and specifications.

Practice		Description	Benefits
High Tunnel		A covered structure used to protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold.	» Improves plant growing conditions » Extends the growing season » Improve plant quality
Low Tunnel		A low-profile temporary covered structure that protects plants.	» Protects plants from cold, sun, and wind » Extends the growing season » Excludes pests from crops
Cover Crops		Grasses, legumes, and/ or broadleaves planted for seasonal cover.	» Reduces erosion » Maintains/increases soil organic matter » Traps and cycles nutrients » Improves water infiltration and water-holding capacity » Reduces compaction
Mulching		Applying plant residues or other suitable materials to the land surface.	» Improves soil moisture management » Reduces weed pressure and erosion » Builds or maintains soil organic matter
Beneficial Insect Habitat		Planting wildlife friendly grasses and wildflowers to support pollinators and beneficial insects.	» Increases pollination of crops » Increases predation/parasitism of pests » Reduces soil erosion, runoff, and improves water quality
Raised Beds		An above-ground growing environment.	» Improves growing conditions where soils are unsuitable for production » Reduces plant root contact with soil contaminants
Micro-irrigation		Managing the volume, frequency, and rate of irrigation water.	» Improves irrigation water use efficiency » Minimizes irrigation-induced soil erosion » Improves plant growing conditions » Reduces energy use

For more information, visit: nrcs.usda.gov/ia