

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to ndicgrants@nd.gov. It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.

Project Name: ND Statewide Tree Planting Initiative

Name of Organization: North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA)

Federal Tax ID #45-0420359

Contact Person/Title Sarah Tunge, Manager

Address 123 Main St, PO Box 346

City McClusky

State ND

Zip Code 58463

E-mail Address mcsced@westriv.com

Web Site Address (If applicable)

Phone 701-873-2101

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal

MAJOR Directive:

Choose only one response

Directive B. Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Additional Directive:

Choose all that apply

Directive A.

Directive C.

Type of organization:

Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

Abstract/Executive Summary.

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

Conservation tree planting is an important component of agricultural systems, improves rural life and enhances wildlife. Field windbreaks help reduce soil erosion during the years of drought and periods of excessive winds. Field windbreaks have been studied and proven to reduce water evaporation from adjacent cropland and increase crop yields. Conservation plantings are designed for streambank stabilization, filter water runoff from adjacent agricultural lands, to provide wildlife habitat, increase safety on roads with snow accumulation, to provide winter protection for wildlife or livestock, and to protect rural homes from snow and wind decreasing energy costs.

The ND Statewide Tree Planting Initiative (NDSTPI) will engage stewards to embrace conservation practices that promote the ecological benefits trees provide. This initiative will focus on encouraging and providing financial assistance to implement agroforestry practices in North Dakota including farmstead, feedlot and field windbreaks, wildlife and riparian plantings, buffers and living snow fences.

The successful NDSTPI has grown in popularity due to the outreach the 54 Soil Conservation Districts have provided in their counties through newspapers, quarterly newsletters, and boots on the ground conservation planning. We have also seen a shift in addressing resource concerns as transition of ownership has changed within farming operations. The number of plantings being installed continues to increase and the high volume of applications submitted each batching period indicate continued and growing support for the program.

Districts promote the Outdoor Heritage Fund through on-site field visits with interested stewards, which often leads to additional conservation planning. To qualify for the program,

district staff submit a CONS 4 tree plan meeting soil suitability and NRCS Field Office Tech Guide specifications. Plans must note that proper site preparation prior to field installation will take place, and ensure all local, state, and federal setbacks are followed.

All approved OHF applications are required to be screened by the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or the Tribal Historical Preservation Office (THPO) depending on the county prior to practice installation. If additional screening is required, landowners will obtain an archaeological survey that SHPO must provide concurrence on. Cost-share for plantings will be paid based on actual installed footage in accordance to their OHF/SCD contract. Eligible landowners sign a ten-year contract to maintain the site. Replacement trees are the responsibility of the landowner.

The NDCDEA will conduct random compliance spot checks in the year of installation to ensure accountability and review the quality of work being installed.

The grant request is \$5,317,000 for a three-year program with total project costs not to exceed \$7,429,500.00. The landowner's obligation will be 25% of the practice installation cost and maintenance outlined in the ten-year contract.

Project Duration: 3-Years

Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.

There will be one application period per year beginning in the fall of 2024 if funded. Applications accepted in 2024 will be for plantings to be completed in 2025. The first request for funds will be in August/September 2025. Requests will continue annually until funds are exhausted.

Field Office Tech Guide requires tree plantings be installed no later than the first week of June, payment applications will be distributed mid-June with a mid-July deadline for submission to NDCDEA. Reimbursement requests will be submitted to the Industrial Commission in August/September. Funds will be distributed to the districts on behalf of the landowners for services rendered as soon as possible after receipt of OHF funds in the NDCDEA account.

Amount of Grant request: \$5,317,000.00

Total Project Costs: \$7,429,500.00

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

Amount of Matching Funds: \$2,122,500.00

A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required. Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of July 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

Amount of Match	Funding Source	Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect)
\$1,312,500	Landowner Obligation	Cash
\$800,000	Soil Conservation Districts	In-Kind
\$		
\$		
\$		
\$		

Certifications

X I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

X I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted in the back of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information – Briefly summarize your organization’s history, mission, current programs and activities.

Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

The ND Conservation District Employees Association was formed on February 11th, 1991, with the purpose of promoting professionalism, providing training, and networking opportunities for district employees throughout the state. NDCDEA advocates for diverse partnerships and collaboration opportunities to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of conservation programs. NDCDEA is a strong partner in the conservation delivery system that includes District Supervisors, the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD), North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (NDSSCC), State and USDA conservation agencies.

NDCDEA sponsors training and leadership opportunities for district employees including technical training, youth and adult outreach, conservation planning, and mentoring.

Collaborative conservation and building strong working relationships with partners is a high priority for the organization.

The NDCDEA Board consists of 12 district employees elected for two-year terms from the NDASCD areas. The Executive Committee, president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer are elected by the board and are able to act in the name of the Association between board meetings. NDCDEA members also serve on various national boards including Natural Resource Policy, National Conservation Planning Partnership Team, and the National Employee Development Board.

NDCDEA has a strong history of successful grant administration, including five Outdoor Heritage Fund Grants for state-wide tree planting initiatives, a National Association of Conservation Districts Conservation Partnership Collaboration grant for \$35,600 to deliver leadership training, USDA conservation practice capacity, and to build an online system to track district accomplishments. In addition, NDCDEA has received four NRCS Conservation Delivery Planning Partnership grants to provide technical and financial assistance for USDA Farm Bill directives and Conservation Collaboration Grants for over \$4,000,000 to continue support for districts working on USDA Farm Bill deliverables and conservation outreach. NDCDEA works with multiple other partners to provide a delivery mechanism for working lands programs and technical assistance.

Purpose of Grant – Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

The purpose of the grant is to continue the STPI for the 2024-2026 tree planting seasons to install conservation tree plantings, including trees and fabric. This program is being utilized to fill the increasing need for financial assistance for conservation trees and to complement current USDA NRCS – Environmental Quality Incentive Program or the USDA FSA – CRP Continuous Sign-up programs. The federal programs often have limited or capped sign-ups as well as a decrease in funding to meet the demand. The program is oriented primarily to the growing number of landowners with resource concerns who do not qualify for other forms of cost share or whose specific conservation practice doesn't attract funding due to federal priorities. This program has created better working relationships with our partners by filling a gap, allowing more conservation to be put on the landscape.

If approved for additional funding, it will allow districts to work with landowners beyond the 2023 tree planting season. Applications are required to be submitted a year prior to planting, to allow for a review process for FOTG specifications, adequate site prep, cultural screenings, and tree availability from our nursery suppliers.

Tree Plantings Completed:

- 2015-2020 1,459 Applicants 7,989,650 linear feet installed
- 2021 247 Applicants 1,345,587 linear feet installed
- 2022 314 Applicants 1,711,474 linear feet installed

- 2023 337 Applicants 1,997,712 linear feet installed
- 2024 468 Applicants 1,672,511 linear feet installed (estimated)
 - 802,387 feet of farmstead windbreaks
 - 421,546 feet of wildlife plantings
 - 182,988 feet of field windbreaks/soil erosion control

Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan? Yes No

If yes, provide a copy with the application.

Note: Projects involving buildings and infrastructure will only be considered if part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Please refer to the “Definitions” section at the back of the form for more details.

Management of Project – Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met.

Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

The NDSTPI program is open to all SCDs to provide services to landowners/producers in the state of North Dakota. The North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA) will coordinate the project. The NDCDEA will provide oversight and coordination of the program through established tracking and reporting mechanisms including applications, tree plans, payment applications and accounting. Districts provide a local connection to ensure the program is accessible to all interested parties in their respective counties.

Conservation Districts are required to submit applications, producer contracts, payment submissions and status reviews to meet grant requirements. Applications will be reviewed by the NDCDEA grant review committee to ensure all technical specifications are met and for tree to soil suitability. In addition, all applications will be submitted for SHPO or THPO review based on county location to ensure planting areas are free of any cultural resource impacts.

The cost for replacement trees and shrubs is not included in the program and will be the responsibility of the landowner, who will be required to sign a 10-year contract to maintain the project. All landowner contracts will be held with grant administrator should a request be made for a state review with receipt of services. Payment submission will contain all legal descriptions, names, and funds dispensed on their behalf. Districts will submit a payment application signed by the landowner/producer to ensure the practice was installed and that they agree with the amount being requested on their behalf.

NDCDEA has also implemented random field spot checks for installed plantings for an additional layer of review to ensure plantings are within technical specifications as well as following approved planting plans.

NDCEA is required to follow audit guidelines ensuring funds are being dispersed accordingly along with federal filing to maintain their 501 C3 status.

Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.

Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

NDCDEA will measure the success of the grant by the number of applications submitted and approved and the actual footage of trees and fabric installed. This will be measured and tracked by the SCDs with approved contracts. Payment request applications will be accompanied by a final planting plan with actual installed footage and planting notes.

We also evaluate success from previous rounds of the STPI that were funded through the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Funds from the first three grant awards were expended prior to the award end date, providing nearly \$7 million in cost-share to North Dakota residents to install trees. Award 018-180 has been allocated in its entirety and will be closed out in October 2024. Award 022-217 will be partially paid out in October 2024, with the remaining balance allocated to 2025 tree plantings

Due to continued demand the current funding allocation will not carry us into the 2026 season. The reason for submitting early for funding consideration is to allow for field visits to be conducted, adequate site preparations, nursery availability and cultural screenings for the future years.

Financial Information

Project Budget – Use the table below to provide an itemized list of project expenses and describe the matching funds being utilized for this project.

Indicate if the matching funds are in the form of cash, indirect costs or in-kind services. The budget should identify all other committed funding sources and the amount of funding from each source. **A minimum of 25% match funding is required.** An application will be scored higher the greater the amount of match funding provided. (See Scoring Form.)

Certain values have been identified for in-kind services as detailed under “Budget Information” at the back of this form. Refer to that section and utilize these values in identifying your matching funds. **NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded. Supporting documentation for project expenses, including bids, must be included or application will be considered incomplete.**

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Applicant's Match Share (In-Kind)	Applicant's Match Share (Indirect)	Other Project Sponsor's Share	Total Each Project Expense
Tree Plantings	\$5,250,000	\$1,312,500	\$800,000	\$	\$	\$7,362,500
Administrative	\$55,000	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$55,000
Cultural Reviews	\$12,000	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$12,000
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Costs	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

Budget Narrative – Use the space below to provide additional detail regarding project expenses.

Cash match is calculated at 75/25 with the landowner responsibility being 25% of the total planting cost. This totals \$1,312,500 for the full grant request.

In-kind match of \$800,000.00 will be contributed by the participating SCDs. This will included field visits, application submission, field staking and order placement, tree installation and follow up certification of practices.

Administrative costs will include the coordination of applications, contracts, and county correspondence, facilitating the review committee, and spot checks. In addition, there will be landowner contract development, file folder maintenance, processing of payment applications, and coordination with SHPO.

Cultural review costs are for applications requiring additional cultural screening by The State Historical Preservation Office; cultural reviews will be reimbursed at 75% of the cost submitted; not to exceed \$2,500.00.

Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.

Include information on the sustainability of this project after OHF funds have been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

Conservation tree planting is an important long-term management tool. Trees provide opportunities to integrate productivity and profitability with environmental stewardship. In turn, this results in healthy, sustainable agricultural systems that can be passed on to future generations.

Individual conservation tree plantings will be managed to ensure effectiveness by the landowner. Overall survival requirements will be outlined within the landowner agreements as well as unacceptable land management practices such as burning, grazing, or destructive tree removal. The landowners will be financially invested in their projects, to secure their buy-in towards ensuring practice success.

NDCDEA continues to explore opportunities to partner with other organizations to continue and/or complement this program, including a \$55 million grant application to the EPA. The EPA grant was not awarded funding this round due to demand and funds available. Working with other organizations to provide cost-share funding to install trees is a priority for our organization.

Partial Funding – Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than that requested.

If partial funding is awarded, NDCDEA will limit the number of applications from each district to ensure needs are met and no district is excluded from the opportunity to access the program. A reduced level of funding would simply result in fewer landowners participating in the program.

Partnership Recognition - If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? * *There must be signage at the location of the project acknowledging OHF funding when appropriate.*

The ND Outdoor Heritage Fund will be listed as primary sponsor on all media releases local SCD's provide in their county. The OHF logo is visible on all advertisement, pamphlets, county newsletters, and statewide press releases. The Outdoor Heritage Fund has also been recognized on a national level with presentations to partner organizations. SCDs also conduct events at the state capital, legislative meetings, and other conferences highlighting OHF projects.

The Statewide Tree Planting Initiative is also highlighted on the Dakota Legacy Initiative website, recognizing the Outdoor Heritage Fund as a primary source of funding. This program page had over 700 views to date in 2024.

Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract? X Yes No

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be:

ABOUT OHF:

The purpose of the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund is to provide funding to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance **conservation** practices in this state by:

Directive A. Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

Directive B. Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Directive C. Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

Directive D. Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

EXEMPTIONS

Outdoor Heritage Fund grants may not be used to finance the following:

- Litigation;
- Lobbying activities;
- Any activity that would interfere, disrupt, or prevent activities associated with surface coal mining operations; sand, gravel, or scoria extraction activities; oil and gas operations; or other energy facility or infrastructure development;
- The acquisition of land or to encumber any land for a term longer than twenty years; or
- Projects outside this state or projects that are beyond the scope of defined activities that fulfill the purposes of Chapter 54-17.8 of the North Dakota Century Code.

OHF funds may not be used, except after a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission, to finance:

- A completed project or project commenced before the grant application is submitted;
- A feasibility or research study;
- Maintenance costs;
- A paving project for a road or parking lot;
- A swimming pool or aquatic park;
- Personal property that is not affixed to the land;
- Playground equipment, except that grant funds may be provided for up to 25% of the cost of the equipment not exceeding \$10,000 per project and all playground equipment grants may not exceed 5% of the total grants per year (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- Staffing or outside consultants except for costs for staffing or an outside consultant to design and implement an approved project based on the documented need of the applicant and the expenditures may not exceed 5% of the grant to a grantee if the grant exceeds \$250,000 and expenditures may not exceed 10% of the grant to a grantee if the grant is \$250,000 or less (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);

- A building except for a building that is included as part of a comprehensive conservation plan for a new or expanded recreational project (see Definitions/Clarifications for definition of comprehensive conservation plan and new or expanded recreational project); or
- A project in which the applicant is not directly involved in the execution and completion of the project.

The goal of the Industrial Commission is that at a minimum 15% of the funding received for a biennium will be given priority for recreation projects that meet Directive D.

The following projects are not eligible for funding, unless there is a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission include:

- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor ice rinks,
- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor athletic courts and sports fields,
- Other substantially similar facilities.
- Infrastructure that is not part of a comprehensive conservation plan.
- Projects not meeting a minimum funding request of \$2,500.

Budget Information

In-kind services used to match the request for Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars shall be valued as follows:

- Labor costs \$15.00 an hour
- Land costs Average rent costs for the county as shown in the most recent publication of the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Services, North Dakota Field Office
- Permanent Equipment Any equipment purchased must be listed separately with documentation showing actual cost. (For example: playground equipment)
- Equipment usage Actual documentation
- Seed & Seedlings Actual documentation
- Transportation Mileage at federal rate
- Supplies & materials Actual documentation

More categories will be added as we better understand the types of applications that will be submitted. We will use as our basis for these standards other State and Federal programs that have established rates. For example, the North Dakota Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program has established rates. If your project includes work that has an established rate under another State Program, please use those rates and note your source.

Definitions/Clarifications:

Building - Defined as "A structure with a roof either with walls or without walls and is attached to the ground in a permanent nature."

Comprehensive Conservation Plan - Defined as "A detailed plan that has been formally adopted by the governing board which includes goals and objectives--both short and long term, must show how this building will enhance the overall conservation goals of the project and the protection or preservation of wildlife and fish habitat or natural areas." This does not need to be a complex multi-page document. It could be included as a part of the application or be an attachment.

New and Expanded Recreational Project means that the proposed building cannot be a replacement of a current building. The proposed building must also be related to either a new or expanded

recreational project--either an expansion in land or an expansion of an existing building or in the opportunities for recreation at the project site.

Playground equipment calculation - Only the actual costs of the playground equipment (a bid or invoice showing the amount of the equipment costs must be provided) - cannot include freight or installation or surface materials or removal of old equipment, etc.

Staffing/Outside Consultants Costs - If you are requesting OHF funding for staffing or for an outside consultant, you must provide information in your application on the need for OHF funding to cover these costs. For example, if you are an entity that has engineering staff you must explain why you don't have sufficient staff to do the work or if specific expertise is needed or whatever the reason is for your entity to retain an outside consultant. If it is a request for reimbursement for staff time then a written explanation is required in the application of why OHF funding is needed to pay for the costs of that staff member(s)' time. **The budget form must reflect on a separate line item the specific amount that is being requested for staffing and/or the hiring of an outside consultant.** This separate line item will then be used to make the calculation of 5% or 10% as outlined in the law. Note that the calculation will be made on the grant less the costs for the consultant or staff.

Maintenance – Activities that preserve or keep infrastructure in a given existing condition, including repairs. Repair means to restore to sound condition after damage, to renew or refresh; except repairs due to damage caused by Acts of God.

Scoring of Grants

Oral Presentation. Please note that you will be given an opportunity to make a ten-minute Oral Presentation at a meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board. These presentations are strongly encouraged.

Open Record. Please note that your application and any attachments will be open records as defined by law and will be posted on the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund website.

All applications will be scored by the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board after your ten-minute oral presentation. The ranking form that will be used by the Board is available on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm> .

Awarding of Grants

All decisions on requests will be reported to applicants no later than 30 days after Industrial Commission consideration. The Commission can set a limit on duration of an offer on each application or if there isn't a specific date indicated in the application for implementation of the project, then the applicant has until the next Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board regular meeting to sign the contract and get the project underway or the commitment for funding will be terminated and the applicant may resubmit for funding. Applicants whose proposals have been approved will receive a contract outlining the terms and conditions of the grant.

Responsibility of Recipient

The recipient of any grant from the Industrial Commission must use the funds awarded for the specific purpose described in the grant application and in accordance with the contract. The

recipient cannot use any of the funds for the purposes stated under Exemptions on the first page of this application.

If you have any questions about the application, the Commission can be reached at 701-328-3722 or outdoorheritage@nd.gov.

Revised: November 4, 2019, April 12, 2023