

Hello and Welcome to the Natural Resources Conservation Service!

We are so glad you have decided to work with us to develop a plan for your farm, forest or ranch. Our goal is to see you succeed in achieving your goals. This is the most important part of the process. The plan should reflect ***your goals for your property.***

Our role is to let you know what NRCS can help you with. So, whether you are a new customer or a returning one, the following is designed to help you understand the process of developing a plan with NRCS, getting that plan into contract, and then implementing those practices that will help you improve your property.

Koa



Coffee

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Part 1: Applications and eligibility

The first part of working with NRCS is assessing the eligibility of both the applicant and the land.

- Eligible land includes agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, Tribal land, or other land that agricultural products, livestock, or forest-related products are produced.
- Eligible individuals or entities must not have a Gross Annual Income greater than \$900,000 for each of the last three tax years and have clear land control for the land they want to put into contract. For 2017 applicants, this includes the years 2015, 2014, and 2013.

The Lihue Field Office will help you through all the eligibility paperwork needed.

- Your responsibility is to stay in touch with us and be able to produce or sign the needed documents before the deadline.

If you are not able to complete the all the eligibility documents in time, you will simply be moved to the next round of funding.

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Part 2: Planning

The Planning part is the most important part of the process. NRCS is here to help you reach your goals and objectives. Therefore, it is important that you are clear on what you want to achieve. We will do everything within our policy and power to help you, but specific ideas on your part are essential.

- All plans must address at least one environmental resource concern such as soil quality improvement, improving habitat for native Hawaiian animals, or improving grazing efficiency to protect the land, etc.

Planning is a partnership between NRCS and you, the client.

NRCS responsibilities:

- NRCS will come out to your land to talk about your goals.
- NRCS will explain to you what we can help with and what we cannot, answering any and all questions.
- NRCS will get you the numbers and estimated dollar amount we can pay you for the individual practices. The payment amount is not designed to pay 100% of the cost of the practice. It is meant to cover 50-75% of the average cost of the labor and materials.

Client responsibilities:

- Client clearly communicates their goals and objectives.
- Asks questions so they understand the whole process.
- Researches what it will take to complete each of the practices in terms of labor and funds.

NRCS is here to help you through the whole process, from beginning to end. We encourage you to ask questions that will help you be fully informed. Please, and we cannot stress this enough, you should never feel you lack adequate information. Please call or email us so you are comfortable with this process.

⇒ Important to note, any practice started before you are in contract and given the green light to start will not be funded, so be realistic in your timelines. For instance, many people may not have the time or funds to plant 1000 trees in a single growing season. By being realistic with your time and funds, your plan will be one that is both doable and enjoyable to complete.

Part 3: Obligation

Every year, NRCS receives funds to obligate contracts.

- We use a ranking process that assesses the environmental benefit of each plan. It is a numerical system with questions that look at the resource concerns being addressed by the practices in the plan. The more environmental benefit, the higher the ranking.
- Then, depending on how much funding we receive, the applications are funded in order of ranking, until the funds run out.
- If your plan is chosen for funding, you will need to sign all the documents. It is your responsibility to fully understand the documents you are signing. We are here to answer your questions, so please ask about anything that is not clear. Remember, the contract is a legally binding agreement between you (the participant), and the USDA.
- If you co-own your land with someone else or you are leasing the land, we will also need something called Land Control Concurrence (landowner(s) sign off that they understand you are getting a contract with the NRCS). We will provide the form to you.

But, even though you are being funded, **you may not start** until we give you the green light.

⇒ As a federal agency, we have a responsibility to protect endangered species and cultural resources.

- There will likely be a delay in starting your practices while potential impacts to cultural resources (walls, heiau, mounds, etc.) and endangered species (Hawaiian Hoary bat, or Blackburn Sphinx Moth, etc.) are being reviewed. This could take up to a few months.



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Part 4: The Green Light

Congratulations! You have now been given the green light to start. By now, having researched where to buy your materials, you can start working on your practices.

- If you are going to be doing any tree planting, this is the time to start considering where you will be buying the plants. While seeds or plugs for ground cover can usually be readily purchased, it is imperative to understand that nurseries will need at least 6 months to a year (or more) to grow your trees.
- ⇒ Do not wait to get your tree and shrub orders in to the nurseries because you may miss the growing season window.
- You have 12 months from when you signed the contract to commence on one of your practices.

Part 5: Implementation and Payment

Great job! You have completed your first practice.

- You can now call your NRCS planner and ask them to inspect the completed practice. As long as it meets or exceeds what you agreed to in the plan, you will be paid for the completed practice.
- Payments are always done by direct deposit.
- Please know that you can call any NRCS staff any time in your implementation process with questions, in fact, we encourage it.
- And, if you run into difficulties and realize that changes are needed, call immediately. We can usually accommodate changes.
- If you are doing a practice that takes a long time to complete, like mulching, make sure to ask the planner to come out to inspect your work periodically.

So, keep in touch with your planner. They are very happy to be there for you.

⇒ Also note, practices may be completed any time prior to the year scheduled. But, if a practice will not be completed on schedule, you will need to contact your NRCS planner and work with them to review your contract's schedule.

⇒ Remember, all practices have life spans. Please maintain your practice for its lifespan. It is on the CPA-1155 above each practice.

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Natural Resources Conservation Service

Lihue Field Office



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU APPLY FOR A NRCS PROGRAM

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND