



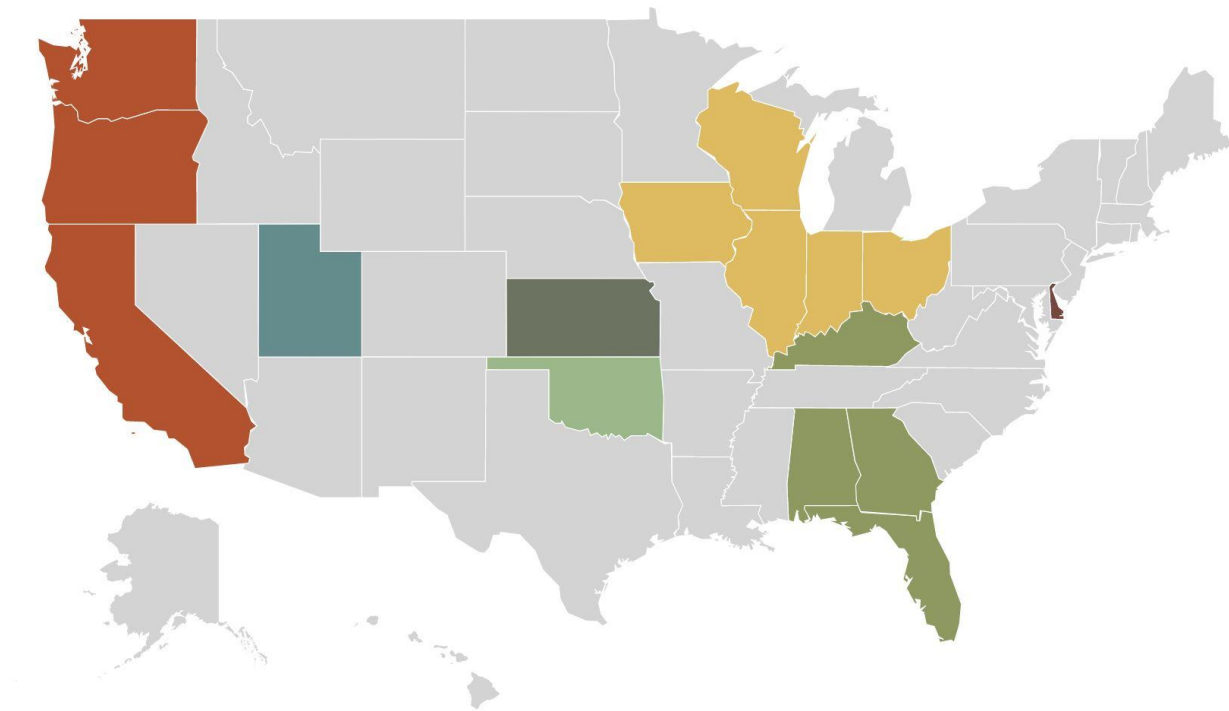
## 2019 NACD Executive Directors' Conference

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On September 22-24, 2019, 17 Executive Directors (ED) of state conservation associations met in South Lake Tahoe, California, for the 2019 NACD Executive Directors' Conference, hosted by the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.

### Attendees and Main Mandates of State Associations

The EDs represented all 7 of NACD's regions (See map below. Each color represents one NACD region). The EDs present held their positions for an average of roughly 3 years, and staff sizes of the state associations varied from 0 (with the ED serving as a contractor) to up to 14 in Iowa. Commonly, the state associations advocate and lobby on behalf of the districts, conduct training and capacity building activities, fundraise, and one association runs a native plant nursery (Washington). See Appendix 1: Attendees, tenure, mandates, and staff sizes for more information on attendees.



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### State Association Programs and Projects Round Table

Each ED shared a program or project that they have in their state, focusing on unique partnerships, funding strategies, outreach campaigns, etc., with summaries below. If the ED used a powerpoint, a link is provided in the project summary.



# National Association of Conservation Districts

State Association	Project Summary
Alabama Association of Conservation Districts	Generally, working to build the association up; NRCS partnership to hire coastal restoration planner who will work in AL, GA, and FL to help producers benefit from oil spill restoration dollars; working to expand irrigation programs across the state; feral swine issues
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts	Central Sierras RCPP for tree mortality crisis (10 million) to help districts do technical assistance, and using that as match to build technical outreach and education; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work across the state; promoting individual fundraising at the district level
Delaware Association of Conservation Districts	#wedighealthsoils and cover crops to meet goals of 50% cover crop adoption throughout state for Cheasepeake Bay protections; cost share, technical assistance, outreach/education Presentation: <a href="#">#wedighealthsoils</a>
Association of Florida Conservation Districts	Districts low on capacity; state association developed a supervisor handbook as the first set of guidelines in many years
Georgia Association of Conservation Districts	Partnerships to manage feral swine throughout the state. Presentation: <a href="#">Conservation Districts and Feral Swine Control</a>
Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources (STAR): large partnership to develop field form and rating system for evaluating nutrient and soil management practices. Program is looking to expand regionally and nationally, contact Grant Hammer for more info: grant.hammer@aiswcd.org Presentation: <a href="#">STAR</a>
Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI): innovative partnerships started through a CIG grant to provide consistent messaging, peer to peer networks, identify adoption curves, etc. Presentation: <a href="#">Indiana Ag Nutrient Alliance</a>
Conservation Districts of Iowa	EPA clean water reporting, 5-year updates: hired 5 planners with NRCS agreement to bring them up to date and oversee implementation. Outreach at RAGBRAI: 7-day cross-state bike ride. 2010 constitutional amendment requiring that future sale tax increase will include a portion for districts.
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts	Increasing district relevancy; working to go beyond annual conference and serve as a greater resource to the districts; building partnerships with other states; working with a local military base and The Nature Conservancy to support veteran programs in agriculture
Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts	Annual lobbying meeting, first ever ED for association (and building the profile of association), reaching out to legislators



# National Association of Conservation Districts

State Association	Project Summary
Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Ohio Agricultural Conservation Commission with goal of verifying and certifying practices farmers are using; ag nutrient alliance to identify research gaps; H2OH initiative
Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts	Peer to peer outreach programs to reach underserved populations. Presentation: <a href="#">Conservation and Agriculture Reach Everyone</a>
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts	OR is watershed focused: in 1980s, 15% lottery funds shifted into conservations and parks, and in 1990s passed permanent funding. Now partnership receives \$103 million from lottery. Presentation: <a href="#">OR's Unique Approach to Watershed Health</a>
Utah Association of Conservation Districts	The association has contributed to restoration and revitalization of downtown Logan. Presentation: <a href="#">Logan River Restoration Project</a>
Washington Association of Conservation Districts	Ocra recovery day: awareness in Puget Sound of the effect of pollution aquatic mammals and salmon. Issues related to water rights between east and west in state
Wisconsin Land and Water	Through many unique media campaigns, WI has brought significant attention to ground and drinking water quality. Presentation: <a href="#">Source Water Protection Program</a>

## Balancing State Association Budgets Round Table

Discussions based on a guiding survey related to membership dues and key sources of revenues. Only 13 individuals responded to the survey, but the results provide some insight into state association budgets (see Appendix 2: Balancing State Association Budgets Handout).

Several attendees mentioned the importance of transparency in motivating districts to pay membership dues, by clearly defining the membership services to the districts. The state associations provide a variety of services, which vary with the cost of membership dues, and may include email, quickbooks and payroll services, unlimited phone data, master liability policies, grant-writing for districts, free registration at annual meetings, etc.

State association dues range from less than \$500 annual to upwards of \$2500 or more annually. Many states struggle with how to structure dues based on the disparities in their states (e.g., some districts have tax bases, some do not), and some states use worksheets for districts to calculate dues based on their own budgets. These resources may be shared amongst the state associations.



# National Association of Conservation Districts

## **Focusing on Conservation Districts and a Vision for Long-Term Sustainability Round Table**

*Karen Buhr, CARCD Executive Director*

CARCD has identified some innovative approaches for building the image of districts across the state, with successes in the state government. Funding through various partnerships have helped to develop RCD vision and marketing standards, funded leadership academies for district managers, contributed to strategic planning, and several other significant outcomes. Additional details are available in the presentation: [CARCD Capacity Building](#). Additional resources are also available in Appendix 3: Focusing on Conservation Districts and a Vision for Long-Term Sustainability Online Resources.

As a direct result of the discussion, the EDs requested access online to various documents from each state, in order to understand some of the methods each association helps support their districts. Those documents are not limited to:

- A summary of any state level funding that supports the state association and the districts (e.g., baseline funding)
- State association statutes and by-laws
- Organization pathways, e.g., connections between NRCS and other significant conservation partners
- Policy books, and any processes for establishing policies, resolutions, etc., and how these are challenged or promoted to the national level
- Employee Handbooks and Board Handbooks
- State Association Annual Reports

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## **USDA Climate Hubs – a New Source for Collaboration**

*Clay Pope, Contractor with the USDA Southern Plains Climate Hub*

The USDA Climate Hub Network provides a variety of tools and support to promote conservation, and the hubs are available to serve as partners to state associations and districts. Learn more in the presentation, [USDA Regional Partnerships—Examples from the Climate Hubs](#), and contact Clay Pope for more information: [claygpope@gmail.com](mailto:claygpope@gmail.com); (405) 699-2087.

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## **Bridging the Divide: Updates on new NACD programs and how you can turn them into opportunities for your districts**

To identify potential opportunities to improve NACD programs, EDs provided feedback on various aspects of NACD's portfolio. [Presentation online](#).

### **Advocacy work**

- Requests for more information on comment periods at the national level that states may be interested in



# National Association of Conservation Districts

- The availability of in-person advocacy training at state association meetings would be helpful if that service is available and could be requested (similar to the training Eric Hansen's has given in Delaware)
- Preparation for the Spring Fly-In at NACD's Annual Meeting would be helpful, as well as sharing resources that other states may bring and any specific asks that the other states may have

## **News and Outreach**

- Provide access to news articles that are subscription only in conservation clips and updates
- Tool: Promotional info for the various weeks: promo kit with generic press release

## **Boot Camp**

- Potential to provide regional trainings or to make boot camp shorter?

## **Technical Assistance Grants**

- See [presentation online](#) and Appendix 4: Technical Assistance Grants Summary – 2018 and 2019
- A variety of states (IA, OK, KS, CA) had successful relationships at the state level, and the application process was fairly uneventful
- Communication, transparency and a longer application period would help all states in better supporting the TA grant application program
- Outreach documents highlighting successes in other states are helpful for different partners to understand what some of the various positions are across the country
- TA financial reporting handout has been super helpful
- For districts who did not apply, challenges included:
  - No overhead, e.g. staff time, to support the management or administration of TA grant employee
  - Lack of match
  - Quick turn-around time on application
  - Can't guarantee continuity in position
- *Please send any additional comments, questions, or suggestions to **Meg Leader**, [meg-leader@nacdnet.org](mailto:meg-leader@nacdnet.org); (812) 512-1811*

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## **Marketing, Communications, and Innovation Round Table**

Attendees share innovative communication tools, ideas, campaigns and technologies that help them market conservation districts to a variety of audiences such as legislators, partners (current and potential), their communities, etc. See additional resources in Appendix 5: Marketing, Communications, and Innovation Resources Online Resources.

## **Newsletters and Communications**

- Most associations use some or all of the following outreach tools:



## National Association of Conservation Districts

- Weekly, biweekly, monthly, or quarterly newsletters
- Monthly calls for district managers and/or board members, with rotating topics
- Specific newsletters during the state legislative sessions
- Monthly columns in partnership publications
- MailChimp is a helpful resource for the newsletters and a lot can be done for free

### ***Certification Programs***

- Several states have an interest in developing state-level seals to identify local products, including non-traditional ag products like roofing materials and turfgrass
- Some examples include:
  - Georgia Grown
  - This is the direction the STAR program in Illinois is moving toward
  - Carbon Credits in Oklahoma
  - Alliance for Watershed Stewardship – international water certification in Wisconsin
  - Farm Stewardship and Certification Program in Maryland (although not a product seal)
    - Farmers are featured on website and given a sign to provide more advocacy for ag; adopted mostly by outward facing groups, e.g., farmstands
    - Many partners involved and logos on sign to showcase partnerships
  - Similar programs exist in Iowa

### ***Conservation Partnership Structures***

- States vary in their partnership structures, which can impact the success of the various organizations
- Some states have written partnership agreements, which help to identify who is responsible for what activities
  - Often, these agreements stipulate regular meetings and/or phone calls, which promote transparency and help to sustain positive relationships
  - Well trained staff is essential to assist in any transitions in board members, etc.
  - Many states with positive working relationships emphasize the importance of face-time (via formal or informal meetings) for building and maintaining positive interactions

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### **Wrap-Up Round Table**

Attendees asked any additional questions or discussed other topics to close out the conference.

### ***How many districts participate in state-level contests?***

- In Oklahoma, 40% of districts participate in poster contest
- In Ohio, the Women's Auxiliary assists with contest management

### ***How many state associations provide websites for districts?***

- FL: 30 websites for 58 districts, but districts want state association to do website updates
  - All districts are mandated to have a website as a special district



# National Association of Conservation Districts

- GA: GACA.us/DistrictName
- KS: less useful to have individual websites, and a lot are shifting to Facebook as it easier to use
- WA: provides many options to districts for websites
  - But website must comply with American with Disabilities Act policies; WACD will host a cluster training on this topic

## ***Emails for supervisors***

- AL: Yes, it is one of the services they provide for districts
  - One email address per district, and can request more but they would be charged
  - G Suite, \$13 per account per year

## ***Smart Phone Applications for the State Associations***

- Alabama is looking into to it
- Indiana and California have used conference applications
- California is also working with a developer to design a pollinator game, which will generate revenue for CARCD

## ***Diversity, Equity, Inclusion***

- Several states emphasized the need to diversify their boards, annual meetings, conservation partnership staff, etc.
- CA has invested a lot of resources into this issue, and will ensure their next conference includes many speakers of color
- Various audiences must be ready for a push for greater diversity, e.g., through trainings and other avenues
- Several partners have good examples of panels on these issues, including the recent annual meeting of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

## ***Other Helpful Websites and Online Resources***

- [WhenIsGood.net](http://WhenIsGood.net) - scheduling
- [Doodle Poll](http://Doodle Poll) - scheduling
- [Survey Monkey](http://Survey Monkey) - surveys
- [Trello](http://Trello) – managing to do lists
- [Asana](http://Asana) – managing to do lists

## ***Junior Board Members***

- To help train and transition younger board members, OK (Beaver County Youth Board) and KY both run successful youth boards

## ***Envirothon:***

- Suggestion that state's prepare emergency plans for their events



# National Association of Conservation Districts

## ***Promoting the Adoption of Conservation Practices***

- Peer to peer programs are very successful in most states
  - Need to promote the cost savings and higher profits of conservation practices, rather than focusing on yields (as yields may be lower in some cases)
- 

## **Closing with California**

*Karen Buhr, Executive Director, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD)*

As a very large and diverse state, coordinating programs, projects, sustainable funding, etc., across such a large region can be challenging. Many partners are supportive of CARCD and the districts, however, and recent efforts like the Natural and Working Lands Guiding Document are supportive in helping to establish goals for how agricultural spaces may contribute to conservation and mitigate climate change. Additional information available in the [presentation online](#).

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## **Conservation Tour and Picnic Lunch**

- [Johnson Meadow](#): A property recently purchased by Tahoe Resource Conservation District (RCD) to preserve open space central to town and restore the Truckee River.
- [Meyers Watercraft Inspection Station](#): Part of Tahoe RCD's program to limit the introduction of aquatic invasive species into Lake Tahoe.
- [Regional Stormwater Monitoring Program](#): Tahoe RCD supports monitoring of stormwater across the basin to help maintain clarity of Lake Tahoe.





# National Association of Conservation Districts

## Appendix 1: Attendees, tenure, mandates, and staff sizes

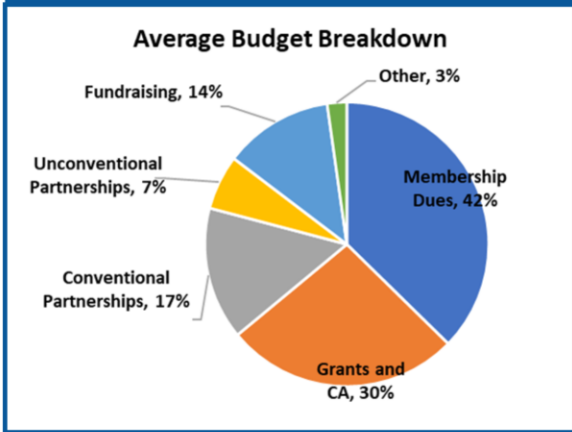
State Association	ED Tenure	Main Mandate of Association	Staff Size
Alabama Association of Conservation Districts			
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts	9 years	District funding	7 staff
Delaware Association of Conservation Districts	1 year	Providing a single district voice	No staff ED is a contractor
Association of Florida Conservation Districts	4 years	Keeping districts open	2 staff, 2 contractors
Georgia Association of Conservation Districts	2 years	Build reputation of state association and district capacity	4 contractors
Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts	1.5 years	Lobbying	3.5 staff
Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts	1.5 years	Providing a single district voice	5 staff
Conservation Districts of Iowa	1 year	District support, lobbying	14 staff
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts	2 years	Capacity building and funding	No staff ED is a contractor
Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts	4 years	Lobbying and public awareness	ED is part-time
Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts	6 months	Administrative functions of districts, lobbying	2 staff
Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts	8 years	Fundraising, lobbying	4 part-time staff ED is a contractor
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts	6 months	Habitat protection for endangered species, lobbying	2 staff
Utah Association of Conservation Districts		Lobbying, partnerships and training	2 part-time staff
Washington Association of Conservation Districts	Third tenure as Interim Executive Director	Native plant nursery, lobbying	New ED starts in January; at maximum, 10 staff
Wisconsin Land and Water	1.5 years	Promoting conservation partnership and relevancy of state issues, advocacy, training	7 staff



## Appendix 2: Balancing State Association Budgets Handout

### Balancing State Association Budgets

#### Survey Results (13 respondents)



#### Grants and Cooperative Agreements

*Focused on completing specified work. Examples:*

- NRCS
- State Agriculture Agencies
- State Water Quality /Environmental Agencies
- Keith Campbell Foundation

#### Conventional Partnerships

*Any baseline funding that is not tied to specific work.*

*There appeared to be some confusion between this and grants.*

State Agencies

#### Unconventional Partnerships

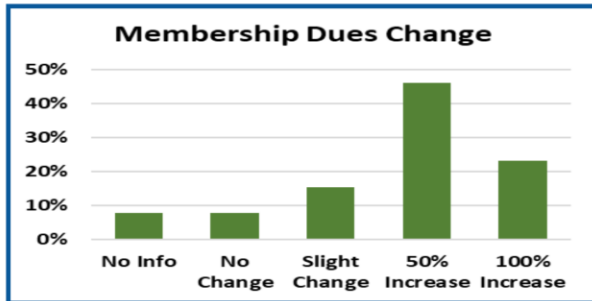
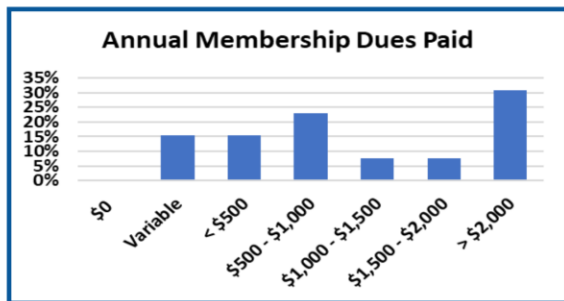
- The Nature Conservancy
- McKnight Foundation
- National Wildlife Federation
- NHF (National Hunting and Fishing Day)
- Corporate Funding
- Local Foundations

#### Fundraising

*Some of these were entered in **Other**. Examples:*

- Annual Conference
- Events, trainings and meetings
- Youth Education
- Donations
- Auctions

## Membership Dues



#### All State Associations Collect Dues

*Based on 13 respondents:*

- Average annual dues ~\$1,500
- Most eligible members (90%) pay full dues
- Most dues are ~50% higher than 10 years ago
- Dues over \$2,000 have seen the largest increases
- 85% of respondents link voting rights to paying dues
- Some states have a sliding scale for dues based on district budget or assessed value
- Some States have payment plans available

#### Other Noted Benefits for Paying Dues

- Serving as officers in the state association
- Grant funding through association
- Leadership class
- Discounted event prices



# National Association of Conservation Districts

## Appendix 3: Focusing on Conservation Districts and a Vision for Long-Term Sustainability Online Resources

### [District Program Evaluation Guide](#)

Evaluation is crucial to ensuring your district's operations are running as efficiently and effectively as possible. In 2008, NACD published this district program evaluation guide to help your district board rate the effectiveness of your district's activities. This process allows the district board and district employees to identify strengths and weaknesses, and make improvements accordingly.

### [Fun Ways to Fundraise and More Dollars for your District](#)

"Fun Ways to Fundraise" is a six-page guide to fundraising activities for conservation districts, state associations, and other groups looking for fun, effective ways to raise money. "More Dollars for your District" is a 10-page document with ideas for financing district operations – many of them from conservation districts themselves! – that can be accomplished by districts large and small with minimal staff. **Interested in learning more?** This [PowerPoint presentation](#) highlights fundraising techniques discussed in "More Dollars for your District" and "Fun Ways to Fundraise."

### [Conflict Management Guidebook](#)

This guide covers techniques for managing and resolving conflict situations, including how to identify potential conflict situations, six steps to manage conflicts, and evaluating the positive and negative aspects of conflict. This guidebook also includes an exercise where you can try your hand at resolving a conflict situation, as well as an analysis section to help evaluate your conflict management skills.

### [Conservation District Guide: Building District Capacity Through District Personnel](#)

With increased responsibilities and growing district staffs, problems can arise. The information in this white paper is based on the experiences of many conservation districts that have successfully solved these problems. This document describes how district employees can help your program, how to determine the need for a district employee, how to avoid problems in working relationships, and more.

### [Personnel Management Reference Book for Conservation District Officials](#)

This comprehensive reference book provides district officials with fundamental personnel management information on which to base their own policies and decisions.

### [Conservation District Guide – How to Recruit Board Members](#)

This guide was adapted from a 2003 NACD publication entitled "Conservation District Board Member Recruitment and Community Outreach Guide." Throughout this document, you'll find space to write down ideas and considerations that will help you craft a board member recruitment strategy for your district and its specific needs. You will also learn how to identify your district's needs, prioritize desired qualities and expertise in district board members, and develop a recruitment prospectus and job description for board members. This document is also available for [download as a DOC file](#).

### [Board Diversity: Adding Diversity to the Conservation Partnership](#)

This guide provides strategies for recruiting new board members and generating interest in conservation district activities within your board's leadership.



# National Association of Conservation Districts

## **Five Tips for Exceptional Board Performance**

Follow these suggestions for keeping your board members motivated and on track.

## **District Officials Training Program**

Each year, NACD recognizes states that have developed and implemented a statewide district official training program. Those states who have sent in their training programs for recognition have provided links to their training information which is available on this [NACD webpage](#) as examples for others in developing or improving their district official training program. For more information, you can also visit the [National Association of State Conservation Agencies' District Training webpage](#) as they are also a partner in this program. If you would like to be included in the District Officials Training Program Recognition, please contact [Kimberly-Uldricks@nacdnet.org](mailto:Kimberly-Uldricks@nacdnet.org).



## Appendix 4: Technical Assistance Grants Summary – 2018 and 2019

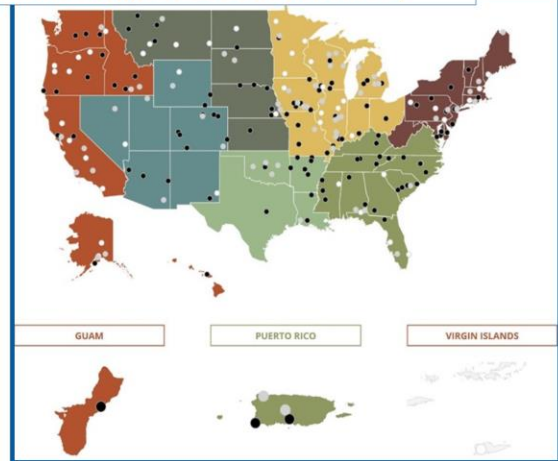
# Technical Assistance Grants

## 2018 and 2019

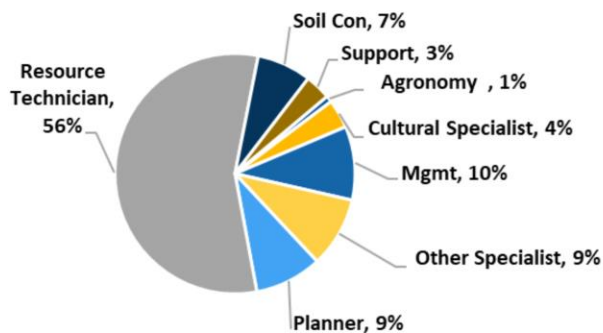
### TA2018 (Round 1)

- Funds distributed to 157 grantees
  - \$7.54 million EQIP
  - \$1.46 million COTA
- Last reports covered April – June 2019
  - Over \$7 million spent
  - Grantees reported spending \$2.7 million in match (28%)
  - Over 230 staff distributed across 300 districts
- Over 40% of the grants are now closed

### Grant Recipients - 2018 and 2019



### NACD Technical Grant 2018 Grant Supported Staff Titles



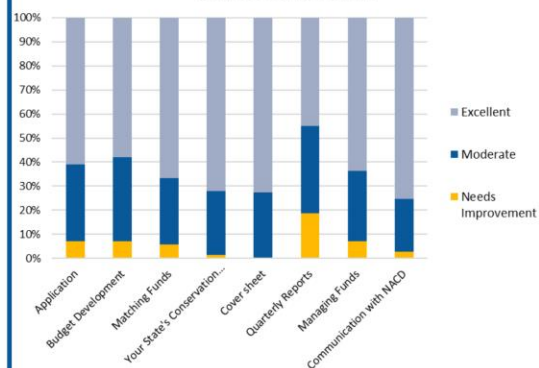
### TA2019 (Round 2)

- Funds distributed to 168 grantees
  - \$3.70 million EQIP
  - \$3.05 million CSP
  - \$3.15 million COTA
- 112 of the grantees also received a TA2018 grant

### Reported Accomplishments

- Grant-Supported Staff have worked over 260,000 hours
  - ⇒ 125 FTE
- Assisted with over 15,000 EQIP Agreements
  - ⇒ About 10% with Historical Underserved Populations
- Completed over 6,800 COTA Plans

### Grantee Satisfaction





# National Association of Conservation Districts

## Appendix 5: Marketing, Communications, and Innovation Resources Online Resources

### [NACD's Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices](#)

These guidelines created by NACD are meant to assist districts and board members in best social media practices when it comes to posting content and engaging online.

### [Media Relations 101](#)

Yes, there's a learning curve, but don't let that dissuade you from mastering the art of media relations! Tell your district's or association's story far and wide by following this guide to building and maintaining relationships with members of the media. This document includes insights on how to handle media requests for interview and comment, how to give a great interview that garners support and not trouble, how to go "off the record" in the right way, how to get reporters to call you, and how to keep reporters coming back.

### [Tips for Working with Local Media](#)

Members of the local media can and should be an integral part of conservation districts' outreach efforts. This brief guide, first published in the summer 2009 edition of *The Resource*, provides tips for establishing and maintaining relationships with media in your community. Also included in this tip sheet are suggestions for honing your conservation message.

### [NACD Advocacy Training Module](#)

NACD developed this training module in 2014 through the generous support of the Walton Family Foundation. This interactive video includes training on leadership expectations of district boards, determining the proper roles for district board members and staff, political advocacy, shaping public opinion, how to craft an elevator speech, coalition building and more.

### [Establishing and Maintaining Relationships with Lawmakers](#)

Developing and maintaining personal relationships with elected officials is an important part of successfully delivering your conservation message and influencing legislation, policy, and budgets. In this document, NACD outlines the steps each conservation district can take to build and sustain relationships with their own lawmakers in this story from the summer 2009 edition of *The Resource*. **Interested in learning more?** This [PowerPoint presentation with notes](#) helps conservation districts and state conservation associations develop relationships with their legislators.

### [August Recess Guide to Grassroots Engagement](#)

NACD has created an [August Recess Guide to Grassroots Engagement](#), designed to assist districts with how to set up a local meeting with their Member of Congress. The guide also provides aspects of a successful meeting to consider during planning, as well as strategies for how to reach out to your elected representative.