

Section 1: OVERALL PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPROACH

A. Description of GHG Reduction Measures

Program Overview

This program expansion request is to expand the existing North Dakota Tree Planting Initiative Program for the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts. This program encompasses the whole state of North Dakota covering the 54 Soil Conservation Districts. These conservation tree plantings are used to address soil health, water quality, livestock protection, energy efficiency, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat along with soil erosion. These plantings are also used to reduce snow capacity on county and state roads to assist the ND Department of Transportation in road clearing reductions. This request for funding includes updates to outdated cooling systems used to store the tree seedlings during the implementation process to increase energy efficiency. The contracting years would include 2025 through 2030 for grant application assistance.

Agricultural practices included in this proposal include the United States Department of Agricultural – (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service practice codes (612) Tree-Shrub Establishment and (484) mulching. The planting installations are completed using the standards and specifications highlighted in the (FOTG) Field Office Technical Guide for these best management practices. Prior to any installation all sites approved are required to be screened by the North Dakota State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or the Tribal Historical Preservation Office (THPO).

612 – Tree and Shrub Establishment is defined by establishing woody plants by planting, direct seeding, or through natural regeneration. The purpose of this practice is used to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- Maintain or improve desirable plant diversity, productivity, and health by establishing woody plants
- Improve water quality by reducing excess nutrients and other pollutants in runoff and ground water
- Restore or maintain native plant communities
- Controls erosion
- Create or improve habitat for target wildlife species, beneficial organisms, or pollinator species compatible with ecological characteristics of the site
- Sequester and store carbon
- Conserve energy
- Provide livestock shelter

484 – Mulching is defined by applying plant residues or other suitable materials to the land surface. This practice is applied to achieve the following purpose(s). Mulch materials may consist of natural or artificial materials of sufficient dimension (depth or thickness) and durability to achieve the intended purpose for the required time period.

- Improve the efficiency of moisture management
- Reduce irrigation energy used in farming/ranching practices and field operations
- Improve the efficient use of irrigation water

- Prevent excessive bank erosion from water conveyance channels
- Reduce concentrated flow erosion
- Reduce sheet, rill and wind erosion
- Improve plant productivity and health
- Maintain or increase organic matter content
- Reduce emissions of particulate matter

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.

Tree Seedling Storage – There are currently 54 Soil Conservation District Offices (SCD) in the state of North Dakota who implement a conservation tree planting program for the sole purpose conserving our natural resources. Many of these Soil Conservation District offices were established in the early 1940's and overtime incorporated a conservation tree planting program dating back to the 1950's. As this program evolved, it has left many Soil Conservation Districts in need of updates to their seedling coolers. These coolers are used for the storage of tree seedlings during the practice installation. Maintaining the most adequate and consistent cooler temperature is imperative to the survival of the tree seedling prior to planting installation. The current conditions they are facing are poor or ineffective insulation, have bad lighting, old inefficient compressors, limited ability to regulate humidity and stabilize temperatures consistently across the entire cooler space (front to back and top to bottom), bad drainage and high energy demands.

Project Delivery Model

North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD) Lead Agency

- Selection and retention of a program administrator
- Develop programmatic materials for practice enrollment and installation
- Set timelines for tracking, measuring, and project progress for EPA (Quarterly – Semi-Annual, and Final)
- Track all expenditures for reimbursement with the 54 Soil Conservation Districts
- Compile all SCD implementation applications for practice installation for contract approval
- Coordinate contract approval for the producers and review all application forms for selection
- Submit required documentation to the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribal Historical Preservation Office (THPO) for sensitive areas prior to installation
- Communicate with county, state, and federal partners for program compliance and awareness
- Consult with North Dakota State Forester staff to assist in energy upgrades for cooler efficiency on behalf of the SCD's

North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (NDSSCC) Coalition Partnership

- Coordinate with NDASCD on program delivery on behalf of the 54 Soil Conservation Districts
- Promote SCD participation with the 54 SCD
- Develop guidelines within the coalition on direct field delivery

North Dakota Soil Conservation Districts (SCD's)

- Market and promote program on a local level
- Conduct on site field visits with landowners for program sign up
- Compile with programmatic materials for practice enrollment and installation
- Submit timely to NDASCD producer applications for contract consideration
- Provide correct application materials for ranking consideration following the Natural Resource Conservation Service (FOTG) specifications
- Ensure all ground conditions are suitable prior to practice installation
- Coordinate the ordering of implementation supplies and occur costs until reporting period for payment submission
- Responsible for the design, installation and checkout of the approved installation practice
- Conduct yearly field status checks to ensure practice is meeting lifespan and survivability percentage.
- Coordinate with the landowner the year following installation for handplant replacements
- Work with electrical contractors for bid procurement and energy efficiency items that need to be updated with their cooling units.

The NDASCD Program Administrator will issue payments to the subawards upon practice installation and field certification. Producers will be selected addressing any historically underserved criteria along with priority preference in within Tribal Areas. Landowners will be responsible for the maintaining two years of handplant replacements to assure the practice is viable and meeting USDA field verifications.

GHG Reduction Measures

The program will deliver \$6,240,000.00 in payments to the SCD subawards to support the implementation of climate-smart practice adoption each year from 2025 to 2030. The payments are to support adoption of climate-smart practices of 2.6 million feet yearly for an estimated 10.4 million feet during the grant period. The final installation reporting will be paid based on actual footage installed upon field verification with a status review conducted in the fall to ensure viability of the planting. We estimate an average of 325 participants per year with an overall impact of 2200 landowners being accepted in the program.

Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The biggest risk with this implementation program is adverse weather conditions. We could experience times of extreme spring moisture and drought conditions. If these conditions fall into an installation factor the landowner has the ability to request a one-year extension. This would impact the yearly goals of the program requirements, but not the overall accomplishments.

On occasion there may be a loss of control to no fault of the landowner that would prohibit them from planting. This scenario would simply be a contract cancellation prior to installation. The funds released would be allocated to the next applicant.

Demonstration of Funding Need

Funding consideration through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Implementation Program would meet a financial need for these installation practices for the state of North Dakota. The past five years we average over 550 applications each year with only being able to fund roughly 325 applicants yearly simply based on current funding sources. A typical year of tree and mulch installation within the 54 Soil Conservation Districts is an average of 2.6 million feet of tree establishment. Increased and continued funding over the course of the implementation grant request, we would be impacting 10.4 million feet equivalent to 1,970 miles addressing the resource concerns addressed above.

We do currently have state and federal funding sources for tree and shrub installation that fall short or landowners don't meet the eligibility requirements. The below items are factors for funding denial.

Federal

1. One practice request on the contract application submission – This is the largest barrier landowners face when they rank within the program criteria for funding consideration. They normally don't rank high enough with one practice request
2. Landowners and entities don't qualify if they aren't in the United States Department of Agricultural system as a registered landowner
3. There is limited funding for this specific practice
4. Time frame of contract acceptance doesn't align with practice installation
5. Counties are competing against each other for funding – where EPA funds would be addressing a statewide demographic area

State

- Outdoor Heritage Fund – this is a competitive grant based on funding requests each year. This grant receives requests from eligible entities which can reduce the amount of funding allocated to each applicant based on available funds.

If EPA funding is received this would be a supplement source since the Federal and State are not meeting the financial needs to the applicant requests. Annual funding sources are never concrete with direct allocation for this specific practice installation. Federal USDA funding fluctuates based on the Farm Bill and initiatives.

The State Outdoor Heritage Fund is never a guarantee simply based on state revenues for the project and competitive process. Historically, USDA funding for this practice request has never met the application requests for landowners. The funding is very limited based on the 5 bullet points addressed above.

The North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts has played a role in securing funds for a Statewide Tree Planting Initiative through the ND Outdoor Heritage Fund. The first award was for the planting years of 2013-2016 for \$1,878,000.00 and the second for \$2,050,000.00 concluding in 2019. Those first two awards were spent down prior to the end date of the project. The third STPI was awarded \$3,070,000.00 for the years 2020 through 2022. This funding exhausted in 2021. The current STPI award

is for \$2,550,000 for 2022-2024. All funds have been allocated and were paid out in September of 2023. A recent grant request was received for an additional \$2,550,000.00 to cover the planting needs into 2025. Due to demand the current funding allocation will not allow us to move past the 2025 planting season.

Transformative Impact

This investment in conservation and agriculture will reduce barriers to implementation of practices and technologies to lower GHG, increase awareness, and create high quality jobs. A primary goal for the project is to accelerate and expand implementation, monitoring and reporting of data related specifically to conservation practices to reduce GHG.

This program will provide a mechanism to affect change across all demographics in ND and break down barriers to participation through a streamlined process, and a payment that not only reflects the cost of adoption but also the risk. This program seeks to engage those areas and producers in a conservation program that provides significant support while limiting process and procedure. Investing in these areas in a monetary capacity and with outreach will create a larger impact on producers seeking to advance their operations through environmental stewardship.

Funding to increase capacity and services in these areas not only impacts producers, but also creates high-impact employment opportunities, thus impacting the local economy. The increased funding opportunity allows for a practice installation that normally wouldn't be installed based on the financial capacity of the landowner.

- **Impact of GHG Reduction Measures**

SUMMARY OF GHG EMISSION REDUCTION RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes total GHG emissions reduced from the expansion of the North Dakota Tree Planting Initiative. Total cumulative emissions reduced were estimated to be 19,400 MT CO₂e from 2025-2030, and 105,622 MT CO₂e from 2025-2050. Through the 2025-2028 growing years of the program, GHG emission reductions accumulate as more acres of trees and shrubs are planted over time.

Table 1. GHG Emission Reductions – Tree Planting Initiative

MT CO ₂ e	Cumulative 2025-2030	Cumulative 2025-2050
Tree Planting Initiative	19,400	105,622

See Table 2 for GHG emissions reductions by year.

Table 2. Annual GHG Emission Reductions – Tree Planting Initiative

MT CO ₂ e	Annual Program	Cumulative Program
2025	1,078	1,078
2026	2,156	3,233
2027	3,233	6,467
2028	4,311	10,778

MT CO₂e	Annual Program	Cumulative Program
2029	4,311	15,089
2030	4,311	19,400
2031	4,311	23,711
2032	4,311	28,022
2033	4,311	32,333
2034	4,311	36,644
2035	4,311	40,956
2036	4,311	45,267
2037	4,311	49,578
2038	4,311	53,889
2039	4,311	58,200
2040	4,311	62,511
2041	4,311	66,822
2042	4,311	71,133
2043	4,311	75,444
2044	4,311	79,756
2045	4,311	84,067
2046	4,311	88,378
2047	4,311	92,689
2048	4,311	97,000
2049	4,311	101,311
2050	4,311	105,622

GHG EMISSION REDUCTION ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

This analysis assumed that landowners would not have established tree and shrub cover without the existence of this expanded program funding and would have otherwise utilized conventional cropland or grassland management practices, therefore assuming baseline GHG emissions reductions of zero.

For the plantings, emission reduction coefficients from COMET-Planner were used due to the transparency and robustness of the analyses that informed their development. This platform was created by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Colorado State University to calculate GHG emission reductions from stored carbon dioxide (CO₂) in soil and avoided N₂O emissions from various agricultural practices, including tree and shrub.¹ Emission reduction coefficients within COMET-Planner are calculated using a sample-based approach and USDA entity-scale GHG inventory methods. They do not include emissions associated with off-site operations, including but not limited to transportation, manufacturing, or processing. The ND Tree Planting Initiative is available across the entire state of North Dakota, therefore the CO₂ and N₂O emission reduction coefficients used for this GHG reduction analysis are assumed to represent an average across all counties in the state and land use types. This is a simplified approach as actual emissions savings in the future will depend on uncertainties such as when and where plantings occur, including variations by region, farm, soil, weather, and other factors. The emission reduction factors used in this analysis are summarized in Table 3 below. There is

¹ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. N.d. "COMET-Planner." Accessed February 2024. Retrieved from: [COMET-Planner](#)

some uncertainty associated with these emissions factors and resulting GHG emissions reductions as these factors represent a statewide average, though actual emissions savings will vary depending on location of plantings, time of year, growth, and more.

Table 3. GHG Emission Reduction Coefficients - Tree and Shrub Establishment

Emission Reduction Coefficients for Tree & Shrub	MT of CO₂e per Acre
CO ₂	1.7062
N ₂ O	0.0997
CO₂e	1.8059

Funds were assumed to be dispensed to support tree and shrub establishment plantings on working lands across four years from 2025 through 2028, planting nearly 597 acres in each year for a total of 2,387 new acres of trees and shrubs. For each of the four planting years, emission reduction coefficients were multiplied by the 597 acres and summed for total emission reductions for that year of planting:

$$1,078 \text{ MT CO}_2\text{e reduced per year} = 596.8 \text{ acres} \times 1.8059 \text{ MT CO}_2\text{e per acre}$$

GHG emissions reductions from previous years' plantings accumulate over time as the plants are assumed to remain in place. Therefore, once all funds have been dispensed, after 2028, roughly 4,311 MT of CO₂e are reduced in each year through 2050.

There is some uncertainty in the resulting GHG emissions reductions estimated here as in reality, the emissions savings will depend on the health and types of plantings and could be greater or lower than this estimate.

Further, this analysis assumed that the GHG emissions that may result from the planting activities are insignificant and considered de minimis compared to the emissions reductions of the entire program. Additionally, these plantings are also used to reduce snow capacity on county and state roads to assist the ND Department of Transportation in road clearing reductions, though there are many factors that may contribute to this potential reduced fuel use benefit. Relatedly, it is possible that additional tree cover might result in additional clearing requirements due to fallen branches and trunks in stormy weather. Therefore, potential GHG emissions added or reduced from changes to road clearing activities were not estimated in this analysis.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF GHG EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS

Table 12 below includes information regarding the cost-effectiveness of the Program's GHG reductions. These dollar per MT CO₂e values were calculated based on the additional funds requested divided by the cumulative GHG emissions reduced from 2025-2030 and 2025-2050.

Table 12. Cost Effectiveness Results – Tree Planting Initiative

Funds Requested	\$/MT CO₂e for GHG Reductions 2025-2030	\$/MT CO₂e for GHG Reductions 2025-2050
Program Total (\$33,885,000)	\$1,747	\$321

Environmental Results – Outputs, Outcomes, and Performance Measures

The North Dakota Tree Planting Initiative will begin marketing and program development for contract applications in 2025. This will require on site field visits with landowners throughout the 54 Soil Conservation Districts. It is imperative that a year of planning goes into each implementation year for a successful planting. Many sites will require ground preparations prior to installation and to ensure tree seedlings are available from our nurseries. This program would install 2.6 million feet of trees yearly with a base cost of \$6,240,000 million. A reduced level of funding would simply result in fewer landowners participating in the program.

Funding consideration allows for the 54 soil conservation districts to hire seasonal workers to help implement these practice components. The SCD's rely greatly on seasonal summer staff to complete these milestones. This would provide an opportunity to increase summer employment to individuals who are hired directly by the SCD office. The employees for the local soil conservation district offices also receive yearly training with topics ranging from proper tree care, cooler maintenance, conservation planning and field equipment.

The program funding is open to all SCD's to provide services to landowners/producers in the state of North Dakota. The Program Administrator will provide oversight and coordination of the project through an established tracking and reporting mechanisms including applications, tree plans, payment applications and accounting. Soil Conservation Districts provide a local connection to ensure the program is accessible to all interested parties in their respective counties. Soil Conservation Districts are required to submit applications, producer contracts, payment submissions and status reviews to meet the grant requirement. All applications will be reviewed by a team of resource professionals to ensure all technical specifications are met and for tree to soil suitability. In addition, all applications will be submitted for SHPO and THPO review based on county location to ensure all plantings are free of any cultural resource impacts.

This program will also require handplant replacements for two years that will be tracked and monitored by the local SCD office and reported to the program administrator. This control measure will be used to maintain the survivability of the tree planting practice along with meeting the requirements of the life span of the practice. The life span in regards to tree and shrub plantings with mulching is 25 years. NDASCD will also implement an additional layer of review by implementing random field spot checks for installed plantings to adhere to the technical specifications set by USDA on the approved planting plans.

All required reporting periods for EPA will be compiled by the Program Administrator for any and all submissions. Information that is obtained for the developed of a contract will be kept on site at the NDASCD office for the duration of the grant and auditing.

Authorities, Implementation Timeline, and Milestones

The project timeline is approximate and assume project start date for practice implementation in the spring of 2025 for completion ending 4th quarter of 2029.

NDASCD is a non-profit organization governed by the North Dakota soil conservation districts, which are political subdivisions of the state. NDASCD's activities include: ability to receive funds and subcontract to all partners providing technical assistance, provide technical reference on program delivery, design, and implementation, administrative and out reach support and to help streamline program design.

NDASCD will act as the state-wide lead along with the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee. The NDSSCC will serve as a communication platform for the program delivery for project implementation, assist in employee training, compiling of performance data, and support any operational methods during the grant period.

The ND soil conservation districts will promote and assist landowners who wish to participate in the program. The SCD's will utilize newsletters, websites, social media, one on one field visits for technical assistance, utilize the best management practices for practice installation, assist in contract selection and maintain all records applicable for the program duration. The SCD's will relay any ongoing barriers to the program along with providing landowner feedback. Funds for the implementation project will not stack if other funding sources are available.

Task and Milestones (Measure 1)

NDASCD proposes to implement tree and shrub establishment with mulching for the state of North Dakota. This program expansion would allow financial assistance to landowners to assist with installation costs. Grant consideration would be for the duration of 2025-2030 with an estimated 2.6 million feet of impact per year with a project goal of 10.4 million feet at timeline completion. This request would encompass four years of practice implementation with the final year of completion assisting in any planting extensions and contracting requirements.

Task	Description	Timeline	Responsibilities
1	Selection of Program Administrator	January 2025	NDASCD will hire program administrator within 3 months of grant acceptance
2	Develop Program Application Review Team	February 2025	NDASCD and program administer will develop review team for application consideration

3	Prepare application documents required for submission	February 2025	Program Administrator will develop required documents for enrollment and job sheets
4	Promotional materials developed for county and statewide marketing efforts	February/March 2025	Provide marketing materials to SCD's for project promotion and utilize Statewide media platform
5	SCD field visits and application packet for funding consideration – Two application rounds per year	Twice yearly 2025-2029 Spring and Fall 10 Application Rounds	SCD's will submit to the Program Administrator for application review team consideration
6	Approval contracts will be submitted to either SHPO or THPO for areas of sensitive impact	Twice yearly 2025-2029 Spring and Fall	Program Administrator will submit all approved applications in their entirety for cultural impacts
7	Contracts cleared for practice installation will be send to the SCD's for contract signatures	Twice yearly 2025-2029 Spring and Fall	Program Administrator will develop individual producer contracts for landowners' signature
8	Conduct field visits to ensure proper ground preparation is completed prior to installation and final signature authority on	Ongoing with contracting years	SCD's will provide onsite field recommendations for proper ground prep and document finding and requirements
9	Order and schedule necessary supplies for practice implementation	Winter of prior to planting years	SCD's will be required to order all tree seedlings, mulching, supplies and hire seasonal staff
10	Spring field inspections and practice installation	Spring of applicable contract year 2026-2030	SCD's will conduct spring field visits prior to planting installation
11	Verify planting installation based on actual footage install and develop payment submission request for Program Administrator	Spring of applicable contract year	SCD's will field verify by measuring actual footage planted correlating to payment submission requirements

12	Tract, process, and compile payment submission to funding agency	Summer planting years of contract	Program Administrator will complete reporting requirements for funding agency and payment submission to the SCD's for practice completed.
13	Compile, monitor and submit quarterly, semi-annual and yearly reports for EPA with program requirements	Quarterly, semi-annual, and yearly of contracting years 2025-2030	Program Administrator will complete these required tasks for EPA

Task and Milestone (Measure 2)

The NDASCD will help coordinate with our agency partners to conduct cooler assessments for any updating requirements the SCD's need to bring their coolers into a more energy efficient operational unit. The tree seedling coolers are very outdated making their systems less efficient. These outdated systems vary in a wide range of components to old compressors, ability to regulate humidity, a stable constant temperature and bad drainage.

Task	Description	Timeline	Responsibilities
1	Existing cooler descriptions and picture submitted for funding consideration	Summer of 2025	SCD's will be required to take pictures and provide documentation of existing cooler structures
2	Review of submitted documentation on cooler structure	Fall/Winter of 2025	Program Administrator will coordinate with state agency personnel for advisement of priority locations and components needing the efficiency improvements – onsite visits
3	Notification of priority replacements	Summer of 2026	Program Administrator will announce priority projects or item replacement to the SCD offices
4	Cost estimates and contractor	Summer/Fall/Winter of 2026	SCD's will be required to submit estimates of cooler updates and energy efficiency items they will be replacing
5	Updates and construction of cooler components	Summer 2027-2029	SCD's will coordinate the installation of energy efficient components with construction contractors

6	Submission of upgrades for payment consideration	Project Completion	SCD's will be required to fill out all necessary expenditure reports, compile final reporting of completed tasks
7	Financial reporting to EPA	Quarterly, semi-annual, yearly	Program Administrator will be required to submit all applicable documents from the tracking database for EPA payment consideration
8	SCD Expense Vouchers Paid	Based on quarterly submission	Program Administrator will distribute expense funds to the SCD's

Section 4: Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities

In 2024, the NDASCD developed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy (DEI) they utilize for the promotion and development of conservation programs while they address natural resource concerns. This living document is to gain greater awareness and understanding of issues important to diverse communities. The charge of NDASCD is to develop programs, policies and procedures related to diversity, equity and inclusion, in order to make conservation delivery accessible and available for all individuals.

The ND Tree Planting Initiative will promote and encourage low-income and socially disadvantaged producers specifically those within the North Dakota Tribal Reservations. This grant request is subject to all landowners within the state of North Dakota with no limitations. We will utilize producer certification to allocate funding in these four priority areas. Based on application submission the producers will have the opportunity to select from the four historically underserved categories utilized by the USDA requirements.

Any applicants meeting these requirements will be placed to the top of the funding priority scale with other applicants to follow. The categories below are in no specific order.

1. Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher
2. Beginning Farmer or Rancher
3. Socially Disadvantage Farmer or Rancher
4. Veteran Farmer or Rancher

There are five Native American Reservations in North Dakota where landowners will be given priority funding. The National Agricultural Statistic Service (NASS) reports that North Dakota has 361 Native American producers. This program would target all Native American producers for funding. The 54 Soil Conservation District offices service all five of the Native American reservations. The following Census track numbers and tribal reservations are in detail below.

- 38005940200;
- 38027959200;
- 38005940100;
- 38079951700;
- 38079951600;

- 38079941800;
- 38079951900;
- 38085940900;
- 38085940800;
- 38053940100;
- 38061940400;
- 38061940300;
- 38010101300;
- 38055961000;
- 38025962200;
- 38077971400;
- 38081974200;

The information provided in the details above will determine contract priority for producer enrollment. The review committee will be fully aware within the application packet to prioritize funding based on their resource concerns. This program will provide an equitable opportunity to all landowners who generally decline the installation of tree and shrub establishments based on the cost of installation.

Equity Partner

NDASCD intends to issue a subaward to one or more “Equity Partners.” The Equity Partner(s) will be selected based upon their existing connections and demonstrated ability to reach and support disadvantaged communities and underserved producers. The Equity Partner will support the project’s goal of 40% enrollment of underserved producers by leading producer outreach activities in disadvantaged communities and to underserved producers. The Equity Partner will also advise partners on barriers to participation for producers in disadvantaged communities, including unique barriers faced by producers in different disadvantaged communities. The Equity Partner will guide the development of program modifications as necessary to support strong enrollment by underserved producers and producers from disadvantaged communities.

NDASCD may issue subaward to more than one equity partner if necessary to serve the unique needs of different disadvantaged communities. If NDFU issues subawards to multiple equity partners, the total commitment from each equity partner will be reduced proportionally to reflect the reduced scope of work.

Section 5: Job Quality

Under this program, the local Soil Conservation Districts would have the ability to hire additional seasonal workers and extend their employment duration based on the increased funding with the additional contracts to be implemented. The seasonal workers would be employees of the local soil conservation district. The time frame of employment typically starts in early April and concludes in July. With the 54 SCD offices this has the potential for approximately 270 seasonal workers to be brought on board for employment. In North Dakota the ability to find seasonal work can sometimes be difficult in a small community. This program would also assist in retaining the soil conservation district staff with the increased workload this program would project. There are currently 54 SCD’s in North Dakota with an average of 116 employees who are full time. The supplies from which our tree seedlings come from

employee an average of 25 workers each with two nurseries in the state of North Dakota. This would increase their demand of seedling production being able to retain their existing employees or hire additional nursery staff with the increase demand.

Section 6: Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

DECLARATION OF CURRENT PROJECTS

Project Title: Farm Bill Specialist USDA Deliverable Assistance

Award Amount: \$2,339,323.44

Award Identifying Number: NR246633XXXXC001

Year of Expiration: August 29th, 2023 to September 30th, 2026

The hiring of 14 Farm Bill Specialists and one Farm Bill Specialist Supervisor will assist local field offices and District Conservationists in multi-county areas to implement conservation programs outlined in the current NRCS Farm Bill. This program is current and on- going with all reporting requirements.

Contact: Mark Hayek, ASTC Partnerships, USDA-NRCS North Dakota Mark.Hayek@usda.gov

DECLARATION OF PAST PROJECT

Project Title: Farm Bill Specialist USDA Deliverable Assistance

Award Amount: \$2,487,200.00

Award Identifying Number: NR1966633XXXXC003

Year of Expiration: September 2019 to October 2023

The hiring of 14 Farm Bill Specialists and one Farm Bill Specialist Supervisor will assist local field offices and District Conservationists in multi-county areas to implement conservation programs outlined in the current NRCS Farm Bill. This project has been completed and current on final reporting.

Contact: Mark Hayek, ASTC Partnerships, USDA-NRCS North Dakota Mark.Hayek@usda.gov

Grant Awards – Non-Federal State Competitive Grant

The North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts were awarded a competitive state grant. The grant request totaled \$1,878,000.00 for a three-year grant period from 2013-2016. These grant funds were distributed by the North Dakota State Industrial Commission. The NDASCD utilized the full dollar allocation prior to the ending of the contract. The number of applications to dollars awarded exceeded the funding request. This grant was used for the installation of tree and shrub establishment with mulching. The planting goals during the duration of the grant included 589 landowner contracts with 2.9 million feet of trees equaling 549 miles.

All requirements of the grant were completed timely for yearly reporting requirements for the ND Industrial Commission.

Staff Expertise

The North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts was formed in 1952 to work within the objectives and specific purpose of the 54 Soil Conservation Districts. Their intent is to further the widespread application of sound and practical soil and water conservation practices on North Dakota farm and ranches. NDASCD assumes active leadership in promoting conservation education in the state.

Rhonda Kelsch, Executive Director for NDASCD, has over 23 years of experience working with the local soil conservation districts on conservation programs and practice implementation. The Executive Director has served in leadership capacities representing State, Regional and National platforms. This experience has brought new and expansion projects to the conservation community. Past experience has included advocating and developing policy and procedures for both state and national operational issues with local soil conservation districts. Participated in a national initiative for office and program efficiency with USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service in various states. Assisted in the development of a national Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy with the National Association of Conservation Districts that structures the framework of addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the 3000 soil and water conservation districts nationwide.

Rhonda has worked on with various state projects to include a statewide marketing platform for the sole purpose to education both urban and rural landowners call the Dakota Legacy Initiative. Secured funding for technical assistance for the North Dakota soil conservation districts, and is developing a statewide urban conservation program. Rhonda has also played an important role with the soil conservation district employee training program. (See Resume)