



Technical Training and Certification Program

Technical Training and Certification Program Individual Development Plans for technical employees

Purpose: The goal of the Technical Training and Certification Program (TTCP) is developing and maintaining a highly trained and competent conservation workforce in Minnesota. In order to meet this goal the TTCP needs to know and understand the current and future technical training needs of Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff. To gather this information, the TTCP developed an Individual Development Plan (Tech Training IDP) for technical staff. The Tech Training IDPs capture credentialing goals and training needs of individual employees as well as organizational goals and needs. The data collected through the Tech Training IDP process is the basis for the annual technical training needs assessment and drives decisions on local and statewide training delivery. The Tech Training IDP focuses on real, documented training needs to achieve and maintain technical skills and credentials while minimizing 'wish list' training.

Benefits: The Tech Training IDP is a key component of the Technical Training and Certification Program and ensures the training delivered through the program matches the training needs of local partners. Completing the IDP benefits your organization because it:

- [Communicates your technical training needs to the TTCP](#)
- [Acts as a catalyst for dialog and idea sharing between supervisors and employees, as well as SWCD and NRCS field offices](#)
- [Provides a framework for identifying organizational capabilities and planning organizational priorities](#)

This guidance document and associated template walks local offices through the following processes:

- 1) Documentation of local priority resource concerns and applicable conservation practices requiring specific technical expertise
- 2) Documentation of Partnership Capability for specific conservation practices and critical skills needed for practice implementation
- 3) Creation of Employee Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for each technical staff member
- 4) Summarizing your Organizational Priorities

Partnership: SWCDs and NRCS field offices will identify local priority resource concerns and conservation practices for their office based on geography, land use, and other factors. The identified local priority resource concerns and conservation practices will be used by SWCDs and NRCS field offices to guide decisions on technical proficiency needs of staff. District Managers and NRCS District Conservationists, along with their staff as appropriate, work together to identify current and future technical capabilities for their office.

Components of the Technical Training and Certification Program IDP Template

PRIORITY WORKSHEET – This worksheet documents the Priority Resource Concerns and Priority Conservation Practices of your county or service area.

PARTNERSHIP CAPABILITY WORKSHEET – This worksheet documents the abilities and competency levels of all technical staff in a county or service area (SWCD, TSA, and NRCS technical staff). Once completed, this worksheet provides a snapshot of partnership abilities and can be used as a planning tool for identifying organizational priorities and employee development goals.

EMPLOYEE IDP WORKSHEETS – Each technical employee has an IDP worksheet documenting their JAA status and goals, technical training needs, advancement goals, and timelines.

SKILLS MATRIX WORKSHEET – This worksheet is a reference document to assist with the completion of the Employee IDPs. This matrix provides recommendations, not requirements, and is used to identify critical skills for each employee based on the conservation practices they work on, or are advancing towards. Use this matrix if you know the specific conservation practices an employee is responsible for.

TRAINING SEQUENCE WORKSHEET – This worksheet is a reference tool to assist with the completion of the Employee IDPs. The tool is designed for users who want to determine critical skills and training needs based on an employee’s position description or the general types of Best Management Practices an employee is responsible for.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES WORKSHEET – This worksheet is a place to summarize the priority technical training needs and JAA goals for your organization.

Instructions

Each SWCD and NRCS Field Office will complete an IDP Template Excel spreadsheet for their respective organization. We recommend the SWCD Manager and NRCS District Conservationist confer and collaborate while completing the Priority and Partnership Capability worksheets. District Conservationist and SWCD Manager can proceed to independently complete the remainder of the worksheets (Employee IDP and Organizational Priorities) for their organization.

Note on collaboration: To gain maximum utility out of this process, it is important for NRCS DCs and SWCD Managers to touch base and discuss their organization’s current technical capability, identify potential gaps in technical capability, and plan for future technical needs.

Priority worksheet

The Priority worksheet documents Priority Resource Concerns in your county or service area and identifies conservation practices commonly used to address the previously identified resource concerns.

Use local water plans, USDA local working group documents, and other local resources to compile a prioritized list of resource concerns for your county or service area. To ensure a complete and thorough list of resource concerns for your local office, consider these additional factors:

- Major land uses
- New trends in land use (for example the recent conversion of forest to irrigated potato cultivation in Central Minnesota)
- 1W1P Implementation Strategies and Actions identified where Plans exist

STEP 1: Identify the Resource Concerns in your county or service area (select from the dropdown lists in cells B11 through B19). See Appendix A for a complete list of the Resource Concerns included in the dropdown lists. Only identify the resource concerns in your area, you do not need to identify all nine.

STEP 2: Identify conservation practices that are used in the county or service area to address the resource concerns identified (Select Priority Conservation Practices from the dropdown menus). See Appendix B for a complete list of conservation practices included in the dropdown list. There is space to list 40 priority conservation practices, however you do not *need* to identify 40. Simply identify the conservation practices that are most important in your county or service area.

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF PRIORITY WORKSHEET

Priority Resource Concerns and Priority Conservation Practices for Conservation Partners

Organization	Burns Homer Pleasant SWCD
Completion Date	2/26/2018

Priority Resource Concern
(select from drop down list below)

Soil Erosion
Soil Quality Degradation
Water Quality Degradation
Priority Resource Concern 4
Priority Resource Concern 5
Priority Resource Concern 6
Priority Resource Concern 7
Priority Resource Concern 8
Priority Resource Concern 9

Priority Conservation Practices
(Select the conservation practices your organization uses to address the local priority resource concerns)

Drainage Water Management (554)
Cover Crop (340)
Water and Sediment Control Basin (638)
Filter Strip (393)
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
Grassed Waterway (412)
Priority Conservation Practice 7
Priority Conservation Practice 8
Priority Conservation Practice 9
Priority Conservation Practice 10
Priority Conservation Practice 11
Priority Conservation Practice 12

Partnership Capability worksheet

The SWCD Manager and NRCS District Conservationist coordinate and complete the Partnership Capability worksheet by determining which organization has the ability to implement conservation practices and at which competency level (JAA). For each conservation practice implemented in the county or service area, document each employee that is currently able to, or desires ability to, work on the practice. Also document each employee’s current JAA level and the desired JAA level (JAA is applicable to only Field Office Technical Guide practices).

STEP 1: Use the *Certifications* table to document current and desired future certifications for your organization. Examples of certifications you may want to track are Certified Conservation Planner, Erosion and Stormwater Management Certification, Certified Wetland Delineator, etc. Add rows to the table to accommodate additional certifications. Pulldown list options for current and future ability are ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Pulldown list options for the Designation are ‘apprentice’, ‘certified’, ‘in-training’, ‘master’, and ‘none’.

STEP 2: The priority conservation practices selected in the Priority worksheet will automatically transfer to the *Competency Levels* table in the Partnership Capability worksheet (cells B15 through B54).

STEP 3: For each Priority Conservation listed in Column B, identify the employee(s) at each organization with the ability, or that is working towards the ability, to independently implement the conservation practice. Add rows as necessary to accommodate more than one employee with the ability or working towards the ability to implement the conservation practice. See figure 2 below for an example. In this example Burns Homer Pleasant SWCD used the priority resource concerns from their local water plan. Then they identified which practices they used to address those concerns. For example, the SWCD frequently promotes Drainage Water Management, Cover Crops, Water and Sediment Control Basins, Filter Strips, Conservation Crop Rotation, and Grasses Waterways as a way to address soil erosion, soil quality degradation, and water quality degradation.

STEP 4: Select the current and future ability, and the current and future JAA Job Class (if applicable to the specific practice). If your county or service area uses the TSA or NRCS Area office to design and/or implement the practice, note this in the Notes/Comments field.

FIGURE 2: DOCUMENTING STAFF COMPETENCY LEVELS

Competency Levels	SWCD					NRCS Field Office				
	Employee	Ability		Job Class		Employee	Ability		Job Class	
Priority Conservation Practice	Employee	Current	Future	Current	Future	Employee	Current	Future	Current	Future
Drainage Water Management (554)	Amanda	no	yes	None	Increase	—				
Cover Crop (340)	Dean	yes	yes	B	Increase	Christy	yes	yes	B	Increase
Water and Sediment Control Basin (638)	Amanda	no	yes	None	Increase	—				
Filter Strip (393)	Dean	yes	yes	None	Increase	Christy	yes	yes	C	Increase
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	Dean	yes	yes	B	Maintain	Christy	no	yes	none	Increase
Grassed Waterway (412)	Amanda	no	yes	None	Increase					
Priority Conservation Practice 7										
Priority Conservation Practice 8										
Priority Conservation Practice 9										
Priority Conservation Practice 10										

STEP 5: If necessary, add rows to accommodate additional employees for a given conservation practice listed. In the example above, Amanda (in addition to Dean) is working towards JAA for Conservation Crop Rotation (328). The Partnership Capability worksheet is formatted to automatically populate the Priority Conservation Practices as identified in the Priority tab. Follow the instructions below to add a row without altering the formatting.

FIGURE 3: ADDING A ROW

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following content:

Conservation Partner Capability Levels
 SWCD and NRCS Field Office coordinate and determine which organization has the ability to implement priority level.

Certifications	SWCD				NRCS Field Office		
	Ability		Designation		Ability		Designation
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current
Certified Conservation Planner	no	yes	None	Certified	no	yes	None
Erosion and Stormwater Management Certification	no	no	None	None	no	no	None
Certified Wetland Delineator	yes	yes	In-training	Certified	no	no	None

Priority Conservation Practice	Employee	SWCD Ability		Job Class		Emp
		Current	Future	Current	Future	
Drainage Water Management (554)	Amanda	no	yes	None	Increase	—
Cover Crop (340)	Dean	yes	yes	B	Increase	Christy
Water and Sediment Control Basin (638)	Amanda	no	yes	None	Increase	—
Filter Strip (393)	Dean	yes	yes	None	Increase	Christy
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	Dean	yes	yes	B	Maintain	Christy
Grassed Waterway (412)	Amanda	no	yes	None	Increase	
=Priority!D17						
Priority Conservation Practice 8						
Priority Conservation Practice 9						

First, scroll to the bottom of the Priority Conservation Practices you've identified for your organization. Select the uppermost cell with the generic 'Priority Conservation Practice #' heading. In Figure 3 above, select cell B23, and delete the formula =Priority!D17 in the formula bar.

Next, copy and paste, or type Conservation Crop Rotation (328) in the unformatted cell.

Completing this worksheet provides a snapshot of the capability and capacity of the local conservation partnership. This worksheet should be updated as employees are hired or leave the organization, and as

employees achieve increased JAA levels or as they broaden their technical skills and add practices to their skillset.

Employee IDP worksheet

The SWCD Manager or NRCS District Conservationist, in consultation with employees, completes an Employee IDP worksheet for each technical staff. The technical IDP worksheet includes space for documenting current JAA and JAA goals, and training needed to meet JAA or other credentialing goals. Training needs are subdivided into the following categories: Basic and Foundational Skills, Advanced Skills, and Practice-specific training.

To complete the Employee IDP worksheet, refer to the Skills Matrix and Training Sequence worksheets. These worksheets are references to help identify the critical skills needed for achieving JAA or competency for a given practice. The Skills Matrix and Training Sequence worksheets are 'locked' and do not require any modifications. Simply use these worksheets to look up the critical skills and training associated with the conservation practices the employee is working towards achieving JAA or other credentials. You may not need to use both reference worksheets. The training and skill recommendations are identical in both worksheets, the only difference is that the information is organized differently.

Skills Matrix: Use the Skills Matrix worksheet if you know the specific conservation practices the employee is, or will be, responsible for. Look up conservation practices in Column B and follow the row across to identify the recommended skills and training. The skills listed along the top correspond to the Basic and Advanced Skills in the pulldown menus in the Employee IDP tab.

Training Sequence: Use this worksheet if you want to determine training needs based on an employee's area of expertise or the types of BMPs they typically work on. Start out by identifying the BMP Category that best describes the work of a particular employee. Then, look down the column and note the training recommendations for that specific BMP category. This sheet organizes trainings by type (Core Competency, Basic Technical, Advanced Technical, and Practice-Specific) and by BMP Category (Agricultural, Non-Agricultural, Urban, Forestry, and Grazing). The skills listed in the Basic Technical Skills and the Advanced Technical Skills tables directly correspond to the skills in the pulldown menus in the Employee IDP tab.

BMP Category Definitions

Ag Structural: conservation practices that are engineered and structural in nature and are implemented in cropland settings. Examples include Water and Sediment Control Basins and Grade Stabilization Structures (Side Inlets).

Ag Ecological: conservation practices that are nonstructural and are implemented in cropland settings. Examples include Cover Crop and Contour Farming.

Non-Ag Structural: conservation practices that are engineered and structural in nature that are not exclusively implemented in cropland settings. Example include Streambank and Shoreline Protection, Wetland Restoration, and the Minnesota Stormwater Manual BMPs like Infiltration Basins and Infiltration Trenches.

Forestry: conservation practices specific for forest land use and management. Examples include Windbreak/Shelterbelt establishment and Forest Stand Improvement.

Grazing: conservation practices specific to pasture and grazing management. Examples include Prescribed Grazing and Forage Harvest Management.

Urban Other: is a catch all category for practices that are not agricultural or cropland based and are not structural practices. Examples include well decommissioning and Irrigation System Design (nonagricultural).

STEP 1: Create an Employee IDP worksheet for each technical employee in your organization: Right click on the Employee 1 IDP tab and select 'Move or Copy'. In the dialog box, select 'Create Copy' at the bottom and hit okay. Continue this process until each technical employee has an IDP worksheet.

STEP 2: Complete the Employee Information at the top of the page.

STEP 3: Complete the *Job Approval Authority and Competency Goals* table. This table includes Conservation Practices, current JAA class for each practice phase, desired JAA for each practice phase, and goal/completion dates. This table also includes check boxes for you to identify if practice-specific training is needed for that particular conservation practice. Refer to the Partnership Capabilities worksheet and transfer each priority conservation practice for a given employee to the JAA and Competency Goals table in their IDP work sheet. Some of the conservation practices are not in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and therefore JAA is not available. However, we still want to capture Competency Goals for non-FOTG practices. For non-FOTG practices (e.g. Minnesota Stormwater Manual practices, Raingarden, etc.) select NA in the Current JAA Job Class/Competency columns. In the Desired JAA/Competency columns, select 'Maintain', or 'Increase'.

Note: Employees may have Conservation Partnership Technical Approval Authority (TAA) for Ecological Practices with an A, B, or C job class. If that is the case, enter A, B, or C as applicable for Current JAA Job Class. The new Ecological Sciences JAA (ESJAA) policy and MN supplement will be available in September 2018.

STEP 4: In the *Basic and Foundational Skills* table, enter the trainings and skills the employee needs based on the priority conservation practices they currently work on and are working towards achieving competency. Refer to the Skills Matrix worksheet for recommendations on what skills are needed for each practice. You can also look at the Training Sequence worksheet to identify basic skills and training recommendations grouped by BMP Track (Ag Structural, Non-Ag Structural, Ag Ecological, Non-Ag Ecological, Urban, Forestry or Grazing). To enter a training not listed in the pulldown menu, select 'Other' and add details in the notes section.

STEP 5: Complete the *Advanced Skills* table by entering the employee's advanced training needs based on the conservation practices they are working towards achieving competency in. Refer to the Skills Matrix worksheet for recommendations on what skills are needed for each practice. You can also look at the Training Sequence worksheet to see Advanced skills and training recommendations grouped by BMP Track (Ag Structural, Non-Ag Structural, Ag Ecological, Non-Ag Ecological, Urban, Forestry or Grazing). To enter a training not listed in the pulldown menu, select 'Other' and add details in the notes section.

STEP 6: Complete the *Formal Practice-Specific* table by checking the boxes (columns K and L) to identify practice specific trainings (Intro and/or Advanced) needed by the employee.

STEP 7: Complete the *Priority on-the-job training* (OJT) table. The key to obtaining JAA is demonstrating competence and the most important way to demonstrate competence is through OJT. In this table, select

the conservation practices that the employee needs OJT training for by checking the relevant boxes. Select the practice phase that OJT is needed for, and note any existing or future projects the employee can work on.

STEP 8: Optional step. Use the *Other Certification Goals* table to document and track non-JAA certifications the employee has or is working towards.

Organizational Priorities worksheet

The SWCD manager and NRCS District Conservationist comprehensively review the Employee IDPs for their respective organizations and summarize organizational training priorities for the following year.

Identify the top 5 training needs in each of the following categories:

- Basic and Foundational Technical
- Advanced Technical
- Practice Specific
- On The Job Training
- JAA Priorities

What's next?

You've completed the IDP template for your organization. Now what?

Report your organizational priorities using the 2018 Priority Technical Training Needs Submission form.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TechnicalTrainingNeeds2018>

The data provided by SWCDs and NRCS Field Offices will be compiled and used as the basis for the 2018 Technical Training Needs Assessment. The Technical Training Needs Assessment will drive what trainings are delivered to best meet the needs of Minnesota's conservation delivery system.

Do you have questions on how to complete the IDP?

The Technical Individual Development Plan is a new process undertaken by the Conservation Partnership in Minnesota. We expect there to be questions, as this is new to all of us. The Technical Training and Certification Program Coordinator, BWSR's Regional Training Engineers and Regional Training Conservationists, and Area Technical Training Team members are great resources to contact if you have questions.

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Appendix A

Complete List of Resource Concerns

The Resource Concerns in the Priority worksheet dropdown list are a consolidation of the USDA NRCS's extensive resource concern list. Additional information on resource concerns is available at [USDA NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook, Subpart H, Exhibit 6](#).

Resource Concern Dropdown list options (Cells B11 through B19)

SOIL EROSION

SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION

EXCESS / INSUFFICIENT WATER

WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION

DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION

INADEQUATE HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION LIMITATION

AIR QUALITY IMPACTS

INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE

Appendix B

List of Conservation Practices

Access Control	High Tunnel System	
Access Road	Integrated Pest Management	Spring Development
Alley Cropping	Irrigation Pipeline	Sprinkler System
Alternative Tile Intakes	Irrigation System Design- Non-ag	Stormwater Runoff Control
Anaerobic Digester	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	Stream Crossing
Animal Mortality Facility	Irrigation Water Management	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
Aquaculture Ponds	Karst Sinkhole Treatment	Streambank and Shoreline Protection
Aquatic Organism Passage	Lined Waterway or Outlet	Stripcropping
Brush Management	Livestock Pipeline	Structure for Water Control
Channel Bed Stabilization	MSM - Construction Practices	Structures for Wildlife
Clearing and Snagging	MSM - Post-construction Filtration BMPs	Subsurface Drain
Combustion System Improvement	MSM - Post-construction Infiltration BMPs	Terrace
Conservation Cover	MSM - Post-construction Retention BMPs	Trails and Walkways
Conservation Crop Rotation	MSM - Pretreatment BMP's	Tree/Shrub Establishment
Constructed Wetland	MSM - Sediment Control BMPs	Tree/Shrub Pruning
Contour Buffer Strips	Mulching	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
Contour Farming	Nutrient Management	Underground Outlet
Cover Crop	Obstruction Removal	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
Critical Area Planting	Open Channel (Two Stage Ditch)	Vegetated Treatment Area
Cross Wind Ridges	Pond	Vegetative Barrier
Cross Wind Trap Strips	Pond Sealing or Lining, Flexible Membrane	Waste Facility Closure
Deep Tillage	Pond Sealing/Lining, Compacted Clay Treatment	Waste Separation Facility
Denitrifying Bioreactor	Prescribed Burning	Waste Storage Facility
Dike	Prescribed Grazing	Waste Transfer
Diversion	Pumping Plant	Waste Treatment
Drainage Water Management	Rain Garden	Water and Sediment Control Basin
Early Successional Habitat Dev./Mgmt	Range Planting	Water Conservation BMPs
Fence	Residue and Tillage Mgmt, No-Till	Water Well
Field Border	Residue and Tillage Mgmt, Reduced Till	Watering Facility
Filter Strip	Restoration of Rare/Declining Natural Communities	Well Decommissioning
Firebreak	Riparian Forest Buffer	Wetland Creation
Forage and Biomass Planting	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	Wetland Enhancement
Forage Harvest Management	Roof Runoff Structure	Wetland Restoration
Forest Stand Improvement	Roofs and Covers	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
Forest Trails and Landings	Saturated Buffer	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
Grade Stabilization Structure (side inlets)	Sediment Basin	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation
Grassed Waterway	Shoreland Restoration	Woody Residue Treatment
Heavy Use Area Protection		
Hedgerow Planting		
Herbaceous Weed Control		
Herbaceous Wind Barriers		