



Pike County Conservation District

**Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP)
Statements of Policy for the Pike County Conservation District
Adopted by the Pike County Conservation District Board on April 17, 2023
Program Implementation Policies and Standards**

The program implementation of the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) will follow the policies and guidance outlined in the delegation agreement between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the State Conservation Commission (Commission) and the Pike County Conservation District (District). These policies set forth are in conjunction with or in addition to the ACAP Guidelines. Districts have the ability to adjust this document to fit the needs of their county.

1. Criteria for Equal Access:

- Correspondence on program and project updates and examples shall be sent to all eligible applicants.
- The application with a specific deadline shall be sent to all eligible applicants.
- Special efforts shall be made to enlist the cooperation of participants through a telephone conversation or a site visit.
- Information, including any application deadlines, shall be publicized in newspapers, social media, radio, and various agency publications.
- No discrimination shall be made based of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

2. Pre-Application Site Visit:

The Conservation District will meet with potential program participants on site to discuss the potential project before an application is submitted for funding. The purpose of a pre-application meeting is to work jointly with the applicant to ensure the application they submit is in the best interest of both entities. The pre-application meeting allows the District to provide input on the potential project at an early stage before the potential program participant has invested a large amount of time and resources in developing an application.

3. Application Process:

All applications for program funding must be received by the District on the “Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program Application” and must be signed by the applicant. Applications will be taken on an ongoing basis but will be ranked, at least quarterly, throughout the year. The applications received will be ranked by the ACAP Local Advisory Workgroup (LAW) and approved by the Conservation District Board. The District has the right to extend deadline dates at their discretion.

The District may retain unfunded ACAP applications on file for up to 2 years for future allocations. Applicants may update or cancel the application at any time. Applicants may also choose to revise

existing submitted applications.

The District reserves the right to deny an application due to active compliance and/or enforcement actions, or a court order issued by or on behalf of the Commission or cooperating agency for violations of Act 38 of 2005, the Clean Streams Law or other program administered by the Commission, or any other criteria established by the Commission.

District staff should review applications for administrative completeness and ensure they comply with established Program policies and guidance. The location of the project, description of the project, including Best Management Practices (BMPs), total cost of the project, the amount and other sources of funding available for the project, relevance of the project to the development, improvement or implementation of the applicant's manure or nutrient management plan, conservation plan or agriculture erosion and sediment control plan are required as part of the grant application.

An applicant represents and agrees they are the sole owner of the real property on which the project is to be performed, or has secured a sufficient property interest, including any easements or right-of-way, necessary to grant access for the completion and maintenance of the project.

District staff will work with applicants to revise the scope of their applications that do not meet program policies. The District may make minor changes to the application and have the applicant show concurrence by initialing and dating the change. In cases where significant changes are needed to the application work plan, the District should work with the applicant to create a new application that represents an acceptable project. Examples of "significant changes" may include: changes in project scope, recommended design changes, considerations for engineering and permitting costs, etc.

Projects funded by ACAP funds in which the estimated cost of the total project (materials, equipment, and labor), exceeds prevailing wage limits (currently \$25,000) are subject to provisions of Pennsylvania's Prevailing Wage Act.

Applications District staff deem complete and potentially acceptable to the program should be forwarded to the District ACAP LAW for review and prioritization. The LAW will review and prioritize applications based on established written criteria and make funding recommendations to the Conservation District board.

All applications for funding must be acted on by the Conservation District board at their next regularly scheduled meeting. All applicants will be notified in writing of the funding decisions of the conservation district board.

4. Project Ranking:

All eligible applications will be ranked according to the following procedure:

- a. The ranking tool "Pike County ACAP Scoring Sheet" will be used, which contains ranking questions determined by the SCC ("ACAP" questions) and the Workgroup ("Local" questions).

- b. Local questions, as determined by the Workgroup, may be modified or updated as new priorities are established or to meet overall program changes.

5. Contracting:

When an application has been accepted and approved by the District board, the District will enter into a Contract agreement (Contract) with the successful program participant. The Contract, when signed by both parties, is a legally binding document between the applicant and the District that describes in detail the responsibilities of both parties. No funding transfers can take place with program participants, and no project work can begin, without a signed Contract. The Contract states the terms and conditions for the project. All Contracts must be made using the “Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program Grantee-District Agreement” form that has been approved by the Commission.

By offering the premises for implementation of this project, project participant agrees to allow access, design preparation and implementation of the project, subject to available funds, for the duration of construction and for the time period identified in the Contract.

The project participant agrees not to destroy, alter, or modify the best management practices, except to perform needed maintenance and repairs, for the period covered by the Contract, nor to undertake any action on land under the project participants control which tends to defeat the purposes of this Contract.

The project participant shall be considered to be in breach of this Contract if they do not maintain and repair the project in compliance with the Operation and Maintenance plan or willfully neglects any other terms of this Contract. The project participant shall be responsible for all normal, routine maintenance and normal, routine repair of the site and project.

Project participant agrees to refund all or part of the program funds paid to them, as determined by the District, if before the expiration of the term of this Contract, the project participant (a) destroys, alters or modifies the BMPs installed, or (b) voluntarily relinquishes control or title to the land on which the BMPs have been established, and the new landowner and/or operator of the land does not agree to maintain the BMPs for the remainder of the term of this Contract. If the new landowner agrees to assume the Landowner’s obligations and to maintain the BMPs for the remainder of the term of this Agreement, then a new Contract shall be executed by the new landowner/program participant.

This Contract shall be binding on the parties, their heirs, legal representatives, successors, and assigns.

6. Project Work:

The following is a list of general pre-project work requirements:

PA One Call must be notified at various stages of the project, including the design phase and also prior to construction. One Call assigns a serial number to each call they receive. These serial numbers must be recorded and kept in the project file.

Some projects may require some type of environmental permit. Program participants are encouraged to work with the District to determine what environmental permits, if any, may be required. Any required permits must be obtained by the grant recipient before advances can be given or work can begin. Under no circumstance can any project work begin until all required permits are obtained.

Some projects may require an Erosion and Sediment Control (E&S) plan. The District will help determine if an E&S plan is necessary.

a. Pre-Project Meeting:

A pre-project meeting is required prior to the beginning of a project. This will allow the District to meet in person with the program participants and any Contractors or sub-Contractors to discuss each Contract item or element of the approved plan to avoid any misunderstanding about how the plan is to be implemented and how payment will be made.

b. Notification of Project Work:

Program participants MUST notify the District before beginning work on a project. The District must also be notified before beginning a new phase of the projects. The District may withhold payments and cancel the Contract if a program participant fails to comply with notification requirements.

c. Performing Project Work:

Program participants must follow the bidding procedures for Contractors and materials as outlined in Appendix A of this policy.

Work must be performed in accordance with the accepted application, work plan and/or design unless program participant and the District agree to project changes in writing. Work must be performed within the Contracted scope, budget, and timeframe.

If an increase in costs or extension of time is required, the District must be contacted as soon as possible. At the District's discretion based on existing policies and funding availability, Contracts may be amended for cost overruns up to 20% percent of the original Contract amount, or to extend the timeframe for completion. When cost over-runs exceed 20% percent of the original Contracted amount, an additional or new Contract will be required. Keep in mind that if a Contract is between \$20,800 and \$25,000 (barely under the prevailing wage threshold for Contracted work), an amendment may increase the total value of the project so that prevailing wage would apply to Contractor costs.

Any Contractors or subcontractors may be asked to sign a statement certifying that the installed components meet or exceed the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications. All Contractors or subcontractors are responsible to protect work from environmental conditions such as temperature extremes, weather events, wind, surface water and ground water.

7. Certification and Final Payment:

Payment shall be made upon satisfactory completion of project for actual services performed consistent with the project application, the work plan and satisfaction of the District.

If a project's BMP(s) require review and certification by a registered professional engineer under the applicable laws or regulations of this Commonwealth, the BMP shall be certified by a registered professional engineer.

Those BMPs required to meet the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications shall be certified by a technical service provider, staff from Conservation District having the appropriate job approval authority, the USDA-NRCS, or any other qualified person who has appropriate training and expertise and is approved by the Commission.

Payment may be withheld on account of defective work not remedied, liens filed, damage by the Contractors to others.

All claims submitted by the program participant pursuant to this agreement shall be submitted to the District in accordance with the Schedule of Payments and the terms and conditions contained in the approved project agreement. The claims shall be itemized and show the utilization of funds are in accordance with the approved project application and work plan. Claims shall include receipts, and/or other appropriate supporting information to document actual expenditures on the project. Payments will be addressed to the program participant and any Contractors or subcontractors associated with the implementation of the project.

PROCEDURES FOR ACAP LOCAL ADVISORY WORKGROUP (LAW) FORMATION & CONDUCT

1. ACAP LAW Formation:

A committee may be appointed by the Conservation District board to advise the program and identify local priorities and opportunities to complement other programs. The LAW in Pike County will be comprised of one non-voting chairman and three voting members as appointed by the Board. The non-voting chairman only gets a vote in instances where there is a tie. The three other local representatives are encouraged to be knowledgeable of agricultural operations and conservation.

2. Meeting Schedule and Procedures:

All LAW meetings will be advertised and open to the general public in accordance with the Sunshine Law (Act 84 of 1986 and any amendments thereafter). The LAW may meet on a monthly or an as needed basis. Specific dates and time will be determined by the members. Additional meetings may be held or meetings may be cancelled at the discretion of the LAW. All recommendations of the LAW must be presented to the District Board for final approval.

3. Conflict of Interest:

If an ACAP Project application involves an applicant that is a District director, LAW member or District staff member or an immediate family member or a business with which they are associated, that individual may not participate in the evaluation, ranking or any deliberation for approval or disapproval of the application or approval of a reimbursement payment of grant funds. This individual will exclude themselves from voting.

APPENDIX A: BIDDING PROCEDURES

ACAP is currently funded with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Federal ARPA funds require bidding procedures. Below are the approved bidding requirements as were approved by the Department of General Services waiver process.

Procurement Method	Expense Amount	Requirements
Micro-purchase (No quotes required)	Less than \$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the price to be reasonable. Distribute equitably among suppliers to the extent practical
Small Purchase Procedures (Relatively simple and informal)	\$10,000 - \$249,999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain/document price or rate quotations from a reasonable number of qualified sources Written or documented quotes required to be kept in the Contract file
Sealed Bids	\$250,000 or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bids must be publicly advertised using standard bidding requirements. Bid must allow for a minimum of 15 days for response time. Bids must be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources Sealed bids must be opened publicly. A Contract award must be made to the lowest responsible bidder. Contract must be for a firm, fixed price

EXAMPLE BIDDING PROCEDURES

- Micro-purchase – Projects less than \$10,000, Districts must consider price to be reasonable and distribute equitably among suppliers to the extent practical.
- Small Purchase - Projects between \$10,000-\$249,000 shall obtain at least three written quotes and kept on record.
- Sealed Bids - Projects with an estimated expenditure of \$250,000 or more shall be competitively bid and publicized.

1. Definitions:

The following words and terms, when used in this document, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

- a. Lowest Bidder/Quote – A bidder/quote who, in a competitive bidding/quoting situation, submits a bid/quote which, as finally determined by the Pike County Conservation District (District), is the best bid/quote available in terms of price, product, and/or service quality, adherence to

specifications, timeliness of delivery, serviceability and maintenance and other factors the District may establish.

- b. Responsible Bidder/Quote – A bidder/quote is considered responsible either through previous experience in business dealings with the District or through an investigation of the credit, reliability, and performance of the bidder/quote.
- c. Responsive Bidder/Quote – A bidder/quote who correctly and fully responds to the bidding/quoting requirements.

2. Invitation to bid/quote.

When it is determined that a project is to be solicited through competitive bidding, an invitation to bid shall be publicly advertised in the local newspaper. Quote invitations will be emailed to a list of interested contactors. The invitation shall include:

- 1. A basic description of the work.
- 2. The quantity of work.
- 3. The method by which specifications and bid/quote documents may be obtained.
- 4. The date, time, and place of the bid/quote opening.
- 5. Any other specific requirements.

3. Publication requirements.

The District shall publish the invitation in the local newspaper to bid at minimum one time not later than 14 days prior to the scheduled bid opening. Copies of the bid/quote package will only be distributed by hard copy, to those interested in submitting a bid/quote and have attended the required bid/quote site showing.

4. Bid/Quote procedure.

All bids and quote shall be firmly sealed in an envelope and labeled so as to indicate the specific project for which the bid/quote is submitted and the scheduled date and time of the opening. Bids will only be accepted by mail or in person. Quotes will be accepted by mail, fax, email or in person. Bids/Quote shall be opened at the appointed time by the ACAP Committee. All bid/quote openings shall be open to the public. Any bids /quotes received after the opening has commenced shall be returned to the Contractor unopened. Upon completion of the bid/quote opening, the Executive Director/Program Manager, consultant and landowner will analyze the bid for conformance with the specifications and recommend to the District Board the lowest responsible and responsive bid/quote.

5. Bid/Quote award.

The District Board shall review the recommendation of the ACAP Committee, Executive Director/Program Manager, consultant, and landowner and may award a Contract to the lowest responsible and responsive bid/quote. All such awards shall be made in a public meeting by the affirmative vote of the majority of the District Board. The District Board shall at all times reserve the right to reject any and all bids/quotes received.

6. Certificates of Insurance:

The bid/quote to whom the Contract is awarded shall take out and maintain during the life of the Contract, adequate Workman's Compensation Insurance for all employees employed on the project and, in case any work is sublet, the Contractor shall require the subcontractor to provide

Workmen's Compensation Insurance for the latter's employees unless such employees are covered by the protection afforded by the Contractor.

A copy of the Certificate of Insurance shall be furnished to the District by the Contractor.

7. Change Orders/Amendments:

Requests for a change order or amendments to the project shall be done in writing and approved by the District Board before the change is undertaken. The District may alter, add, or subtract portions of the work without invalidating the original Contract as long as the Contract sum is adjusted accordingly. Extra compensation can be earned if the extra work was unforeseen as a possibility in the original Contract and the extra work was performed in compliance with the Contract. Change orders shall be limited to no more than 20% of the original Contract amount, at the discretion of the District and negotiation with the Contractor.