

Technical Service Area Grants Program Policy

For Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Technical Service Areas

Version: 2017

Effective Date: 07/01/2017

Approval: Board Resolution # 17-51

Policy Statement

Technical Service Area (TSA) Program grants are used to deliver essential engineering and associated technical services for critical soil and water conservation and water quality practices and projects on private lands through shared engineering and associated technical services provided by and through member Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). These services are considered essential to the success of private lands conservation programs administered by BWSR and other state and federal agencies.

TSA Program grants are delivered through eight Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Joint Powers Organizations (JPOs), also called TSAs, covering all of Minnesota. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, §103C.231, an SWCD may join or cooperate by agreement as provided in Section 471.59 with another SWCD in an operation or project in which the SWCDs have a common interest.

Applicable Programs and Grants

- Nonpoint Engineering Assistance Program (State General Fund)
- Accelerated Implementation – Enhanced Shared Technical Services Grants (Clean Water Fund)

Reason for the Policy and Minimum Eligibility Criteria

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear expectations for the administration of Program grants. TSA board and staff are responsible for the administration and decisions concerning the local use of these funds in accordance with applicable Minnesota Statutes, BWSR policies, and other applicable laws. BWSR will use grant agreements as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with applicable laws and program policies. **The BWSR Grants Administration Manual provides the primary framework for local management of these funds.**

Based on the following minimum criteria, available funds are allocated to TSAs that have fully complied with all program policies:

- Past success of the TSA in providing shared engineering and associated technical assistance for conservation practices and projects to and through member SWCDs;
- Ability of the TSA to expend the funds in a timely manner; and
- The past success of the TSA in complying with the applicable minimum grant reporting requirements.

Eligible Activities and Program Requirements

1. Eligible Activities

The primary purpose of activities funded with TSA Program grants is to provide shared engineering and other critical technical services. Eligible activities are split into the following four categories:

- 1.1. **Technical and Engineering.** A key priority for TSA funds is shared engineering and other critical technical services for erosion and sediment control and water quality in accordance with the approved grant work plan. Eligible activities and expenses include but are not limited to: 1) Engineering – site evaluation, design, & construction, 2) Technical Services – forest land management, GIS, groundwater protection, monitoring, and other conservation practices, 3) Associated targeted priority services such as Wetland Conservation Act services, outreach to landowners, feedlot program services, grant writing, assist landowners in meeting regulatory requirements.
- 1.2. **Administration and Coordination Activities.** Eligible activities include the administrative costs of the host district(s) and fiscal agent approved in accordance with the approved grant work plan, including: TSA staff training and coordination with the TSA Board and staff, member SWCDs, and partners.
- 1.3. **Education and Information.** Eligible items and expenses include the associated costs of TSA staff or members developing and providing technical training based on regional needs to member SWCDs and partners approved in the grant work plan.
- 1.4. **Equipment and Supplies.** Eligible expenses include necessary equipment, hardware, software, and supplies, in accordance with the approved grant work plan.

2. Grant Match Requirements

A minimum 10% cash match is required from local or federal funds. The anticipated source(s) for this match shall be identified in the grant work plan.

3. Grant Work Plan and Reporting Requirements

To ensure the continued success of the TSA Program, development of grant work plans, regular reporting of expenditures, technical assistance, and shared services accomplishments are required.

- 3.1. **Grant Work Plan.** Work plans shall be developed in eLINK and must be approved before work can begin on these grants. Work plans shall reflect each eligible activity, a description of the anticipated activity accomplishments, and grant and match funding amounts to accomplish each of the activities.
- 3.2. **Reporting.** Descriptions of actual results and financial expenditures for each work plan activity must be reported in eLINK by February 1 of each year. Additional accomplishment reporting for all projects and assistance provided by the TSA for the calendar year, regardless of grant fund used to fund the project or assistance, is also required. The procedures and templates for accomplishments reporting will be provided by BWSR.

- 3.3. **Grant Closeout.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of the conclusion of each grant agreement or expenditure of all grant funds, fiscal agents of the TSA are required to:
- a. Provide documentation of all work plan activities completed with the grant funding in eLINK; and
 - b. Submit a signed eLINK Financial Report to BWSR; and
 - c. Return any unspent funds.
- 3.4. **Annual Financial Statement.** The TSA must submit an annual financial statement to BWSR by March 15th of each year. BWSR will then submit the financial statements to the Office of the State Auditor. The TSA shall post and retain the annual financial statement on the TSA fiscal agent’s website.
- 3.5. **Audit.** A TSA will be audited at least once every three years or sooner if its total revenue since last audit reaches \$500,000. The audit must be conducted by an independent certified public accountant and then submitted first to the Office of the State Auditor in draft form, and once approved, sent to BWSR.
- 3.6. **Records Retention.** Program files must be retained by the TSA pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, §138.17, consistent with ongoing records retention schedules, and the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

4. BWSR Program Monitoring and Reconciliation Requirements

BWSR staff is authorized to develop grant agreements, including requirements and processes for project outcomes reporting, closeouts, fiscal reconciliations, and grant verifications. All grantees must follow the grant agreement and Grants Administration Manual.

In the event there is a violation of the terms of the grant agreement, BWSR will enforce the grant agreement and evaluate appropriate actions, up to and including repayment of grant funds at a rate up to 100% of the grant agreement.

History

Version	Description	Date
2017	Technical Service Area Grants Program Policy combining requirements for General fund Nonpoint Engineering Assistance and Clean Water Fund Accelerated Implementation grants and other Enhanced Shared Technical Services grants into one policy.	7/1/17