

## **Attachment K**

### **SCOPE OF WORK**

#### **CONSULTANT SERVICES FOR 25-83926 Capacity Development Needs Assessment for Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

## **SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Organization Overview**

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) was established as a state agency by the Legislature in 2005. ISDA reports to the Lt. Governor, who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.

The Division of Soil Conservation (DSC), as part of the ISDA, collaborates with conservation organizations and local Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to provide technical, educational, and financial assistance to land users promoting the conservation of Indiana's soil and water resources.

The DSC administers the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Program Fund, under the direction of the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB), to assist SWCDs and conservation organizations in implementing conservation across the State. In addition to program support, the CWI Program Fund also provides direct capacity-building assistance to SWCDs.

SWCDs constitute as a governmental subdivision of the state and are recognized as public bodies which can exercise public powers. In short, they are quasi-governmental units, or special districts, operating at the county level and supported by county and/or state resources, like the CWI Program Fund.

### **1.3 Project Description**

Many SWCDs face significant capacity challenges limiting their ability to deliver technical assistance, secure funding, and implement conservation programs. Capacity and operational limitations can lead to missed funding opportunities, weakened community outreach, and increased environmental risks such as soil erosion, water pollution, and declining soil health.

Building capacity within Indiana's local SWCDs is essential to the success of conservation and protecting the State's natural resources. Strong district capacity ensures long-term sustainability, enhances collaboration with agricultural and conservation partners, and empowers local communities to adopt practices to improve soil health, water quality, and water use efficiency.

This solicitation, issued by the DSC on behalf of the SSCB, seeks to gather critical information through a needs assessment to help identify and address specific capacity and operational challenges. The goal is to develop a plan that identifies and proposes recommendations for targeted support, training, and resources to help SWCD employees and SWCD Board of Supervisors fulfill their roles and responsibilities more confidently and sustainably.

## **2.1 Funding Availability**

A total of \$250,000 is available for the assessment of Indiana Soil and Water Conservation SWCD capacity development needs. Pricing should be reasonable for the deliverables to be completed under the proposal.

## **2.2 Project Timeline**

The anticipated timeline is:

- This assessment should be completed in 1 year from contractor selection date.

## **2.3 Objectives**

The DSC would like the assessment to have 4 phases for two distinct groups: SWCD Employees and SWCD Board of Supervisors. These phases include gathering information, the needs assessment, general evaluation and recommendations, and developing a road map for action.

### **Phase 1 – Information Gathering**

- Information gathering
- Survey(s) and outreach plan development
- Additional data collection
- Attend monthly meeting with the District Capacity Development workgroup

### **Phase 2 – Needs Assessment**

- Synthesizing and analyzing information
- Attend monthly meeting with the District Capacity Development workgroup

### **Phase 3 – General Evaluation and Recommendations**

- Initial findings report
- Attend monthly meeting with the District Capacity Development workgroup

### **Phase 4 – Develop a Road Map for Action**

- Compile and share raw data with ISDA
- Final reporting
- Attend monthly meeting with the District Capacity Development workgroup

The primary objective of this project is to deliver an informative and optimized report that serves as a guide for addressing identified barriers SWCD employees and SWCD Board of Supervisors encounter with capacity development and operations. This will serve as a road

map for the SSCB, DSC, and others as we continue to support and strengthen SWCD development. The findings will be public and be shared amongst appropriate partners. All final results and raw data collected from this project will be shared with ISDA for our reference and use.

The DSC and SSCB define capacities for SWCD employees broadly, including, but not limited to:

- *Social* – capacities for landowner and farmer assistance, community outreach and education, public awareness and marketing, and partner engagement.
- *Organizational* – capacities for development such as grant and program management, professional development, board support, regulatory compliance and reporting, daily operations and workflows, technology and equipment maintenance, and/or project implementation and tracking SWCD impact.

The DSC and SSCB define capacities for SWCD Board of Supervisors broadly, including, but not limited to:

- *Social* – capacities for community representation, partner engagement, policy awareness with local, state, and federal government officials, public awareness and outreach, and board recruitment.
- *Organizational* – capacities for development such as board training and education, strategic planning and goal setting, succession planning, committee development, board performance and evaluation, supervision and support of SWCD employees, and legal and ethical compliance.

Objectives to be achieved:

This report should be holistic, informative, and thoughtful in its approach of analysis. The contractor should consider a collective impact assessment focused on identifying barriers and needs of SWCD employees **and** SWCD Board of Supervisors using exploratory assessment methodologies.

1. Assess current capacity and operational effectiveness
  - Identify strengths and gaps in operations, governance, staffing, and service delivery.
  - Review the adequacy of funding sources and financial management practices.

2. Identify training and professional development needs
  - Assess knowledge gaps and skill levels of SWCD employees and Board of Supervisors related to conservation planning, grant management, and technical assistance.
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of current training programs and resources and identify areas for improvement.
  - Assess use and understanding of existing tools available for training and professional development
3. Personnel and board management
  - Identify barriers of recruitment for employees and board members
  - Identify barriers of retaining employees and board members
  - Identify tools and needs to improve working relationships between employees and board members
4. Evaluate resource needs
  - Assess the adequacy of technology, equipment and facilities to support SWCD operations.
  - Identify gaps in digital tools and data management systems to support operations and conservation implementation.
5. Assess community engagement and partnerships
  - Analyze how SWCDs collaborate with local, state, and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, landowners, and other unidentified partners.
  - Evaluate SWCD and county government support, connections, and interactions that would result in a SWCD to be recognized by their county.
  - Identify barriers to partnerships and recommend strategies to improve coordination and engagement
6. Evaluate program and service delivery
  - Assess the effectiveness of SWCDs in delivering conservation programs, technical assistance, and cost-share programs.
  - Identify gaps in service delivery and make recommendations to improve program reach and impact
  - Assess understanding and use of leveraging sheets which showcase impact of SWCD funds within the county
7. Develop recommendations for strengthening capacity

- Provide short-term and long-term recommendations to improve SWCD operations, funding sustainability, and program effectiveness.
- Recommend best practices from successful conservation districts.
- Identify policy or regulatory changes that could support capacity development.
- Evaluate interest or opportunities for SWCD consolidation

8. Develop a road map for strategic implementation

- Outline steps for the SSCB, DSC, and others for implementing capacity building initiatives; including funding strategies, training programs, SWCD evaluation programs, and technology upgrades.
- Provide a phased approach for addressing challenges and opportunities for SWCD employees and SWCD Board of Supervisors.
- Recommend performance metrics to track progress over time.

### **SECTION 3. PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

The contractor should confirm the project description, objectives and deliverables, audiences, phasing, and budgeting constraints, resulting in a creative proposal.

The completed report must be grouped and presented in a logical manner; should be visually appealing; and should serve several audiences such as the SSCB, the ISDA, SWCD, and legislators.

#### **Section 3.1 Proposal Format**

##### Introduction/Organizational Capacity

- Provide a brief history of your organization and experience with similar projects.
- Provide a brief narrative of the proposed implementation to address the outlined objectives and deliverables.

##### Personnel

- Please provide a brief description of the qualifications and experience of your team that will be working on this project. Please attach resumes.

##### Workplan

- Provide a narrative description of how you will meet the requirements outlined in the scope of the project. The workplan must describe how you will plan for the proposed project phases for both identified groups: SWCD Employees and SWCD Board of Supervisors. Please include your proposed methodology including any survey tools, analysis, stakeholder meetings, or interviews which may be used to carry out the project phases.

#### Timeline

- Provide a timeline for the project that includes estimated start and complete dates for project phases and associated tasks and deliverables.

#### Examples of past work and references

- Please provide at least three references, see Attachment H.
- Attach at least three examples of successful past work that may be similar in nature to this request.

#### Budget

- Please provide a budget summary and justification. This would be completed on Attachment D-Cost Summary.