

District Official Training Program Review Checklist

Basic Knowledge

History of the Conservation Movement – Local, State, and National

Recommended training elements:

- Dust Bowl Era
- Hugh Hammond Bennett
- Soil Erosion Service formation
- Conservation District origins - need for local input for conservation work
- Standard Conservation District Law
- Overview of State Conservation District Law formation
- Local conservation district formation & history
- Conservation District values
- Current information about districts (in state)

What is a Conservation District?

Recommended training elements:

- Conservation district purpose & function
- Legal definition in district law
- District as government entity
- Board member qualifications
- Overview of board member responsibilities & duties in policy development, planning, governance, district operations, officers & responsibilities, personnel management

Fiduciary Responsibilities

Recommended training elements:

- Fiduciary duties of district board members
- Available funding mechanisms
- Financial policies and procedures
- Budgeting & allocating resources
- Audit requirements
- Importance of financial planning
- Internal controls
- (see financial training below)

Legal Responsibilities

Recommended training elements:

- Powers & authorities of conservation districts
- Powers & authorities of board members
- Legal responsibilities of a public official
- Assessing resource needs
- Developing long range and annual plans
- Policy development & recommended policies
- District liability
- Comply with local, state & federal laws, rules, and regulations

Roles and Responsibilities of Local, State and National Associations and Partners

Recommended training elements:

- Importance of forming partnerships for district program delivery
- Partnership development & group dynamics
- State association history and structure
- Area & regional associations history & structure
- National association history and structure
- Functions of an association
- Specific programs offered by local, state and national associations
- NRCS history, structure & responsibilities
- State conservation agency history, structure, position, and responsibilities
- Mutual Agreement between district, USDA and Governor
- Cooperative Agreements
- Other State Agencies structure & potential partner opportunities
- Other Federal agencies structure & potential partner opportunities
- Local agencies structure & potential partner opportunities
- Other partner organizations history, structure & responsibilities (non-government)
- Memorandums of Understanding and other agreements with specifics about roles and responsibilities
- Acronym listing of existing partnerships
- Examples of successful partnerships

Ethics

Recommended training elements:

- Oath of Office
- Abuse of position
- Employee/supervisor relationships
- Acceptance of gifts
- Conflict of interest
- Diversity
- Nepotism
- Confidentiality

Basic Responsibilities

Understand Local, State and Federal Laws, Rules and Regulations Related to CD

Recommended training elements:

- Overview of local, state and federal laws, rules & regulations related to the district
- State Conservation District Law
- State & Federal Freedom of Information Acts (FOIA) & compliance procedure
- Other state public records acts & compliance procedure
- State open public meetings act
- State & Federal ethics acts
- USDA requirements for shared office space

Employee Training

Recommended training elements:

- Implement policies and activities as approved by board
- District personnel policies
- District organizational structure including who reports to whom
- Role of district board members, manager, staff
- Advise board on issues, projects, budgets and other matters
- Reporting to the board, residents, and partners about district activities & programs
- Development of training plans
- Training, certification and mentoring opportunities for district employees
- Working with partner agencies & organizations
- USDA requirements (if shared office location)

Financial Training

Recommended training elements:

- Available funding mechanisms
- Budgeting & allocating resources
- Importance of financial planning
- Fund raising
- Financial policies & procedures
- Financial statements & accounting methods
- Fiduciary duties of district board members
- State audit & reporting requirements
- Internal controls
- Grant contracts & agreements
- Personnel records and reporting requirements

Understanding State and National Resolutions Process

Recommended training elements:

- Developing a district policy positions & resolutions
- Flowchart of resolution approval - district to area, to state and national
- Determining the appropriate level of influence for the proposed resolution

Awareness of All Available Conservation Programs

Recommended training elements:

- Awareness of natural resource needs
- Example of conservation management
- Promoting the ethic of resource stewardship
- Coordination with federal, state and local entities for program delivery
- Education activities
- Review of available federal, state, local and private conservation programs
- Examples of successful programs
- Acronym listing
- Cooperator agreement
- Conservation planning

Legislative Process Training

Recommended training elements:

- Effective legislative relations
- Techniques for communicating effectively, credibly & building trust with elected officials
- State & federal bills & budget passage flow chart
- Lobbying restrictions for board members & staff
- Role of associations in legislative relations & lobbying

Awareness of Proper Protocol in Conducting Public Meetings

Recommended training elements:

- State open public meetings act requirements & compliance
- Conducting effective board meetings
- Decision making
- Executive and/or closed session rules & regulations
- Public hearings

Basic Operations

Recommended training elements:

- Assessment of local natural resource conservation needs & issues
- Techniques for evaluating district program effectiveness
- Stakeholder input to planning
- Importance of long range & annual planning, budgeting money & workload
- Establish goals through strategic, long-range, and annual planning
- Establish operations policies and procedures
- Implement a personnel management system
- Development of reports
- Contracting & bidding
- Agreements with other entities
- Overall district operations
- Leadership skills
- Media relations & public outreach

Election Process and Board Member Recruitment

Recommended training elements:

- Characteristics of a successful district board members
- Analyzing the needs in district and desirable qualities and needed skills for board member recruitment
- Board member recruitment techniques
- Creating a more diverse board representative of those served
- Board member election and/or appointment process, procedures, forms, & deadlines
- Orientation systems for new board members
- Board member removal