

Technical Service Provider (TSP)

Agricultural Advisory Board

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Overview

A TSP provides the same technical assistance to a producer who has an EQIP contract that an NRCS employee would provide to a producer.

TSPs must be certified and displayed on the TechReg website.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp/>

Click "Find a TSP"

Click "the state of PA on the map"

Click "here" for the full list

(Note: Only TSPs and NRCS employees need to do the login. Farmers who just want to see the list can use the instructions above. There also is a drop down sort function for particular practices.)

The producer with the EQIP contact selects a TSP from the list on the TechReg website.

The producer and the TSP negotiate a price.

The TSP is paid by the producer who holds the EQIP contract.

The producer who holds the EQIP contract is reimbursed by NRCS for a predetermined amount shown in the EQIP contract.

Ag consultants that are hired by farmers to provide services the farmer is doing outside an EQIP contract are not TSPs. However, the term TSP has become widely used and accepted for all ag consultant work and that has caused some confusion. A person may be an Ag Consultant in the morning and then serving as a TSP in the afternoon.

TSP Details

TSP Certification

A TSP is person who has gone through the certification process and their name, resume, and contact information is shown on the website, TechReg.

The certification is in a specific conservation practice or suite of practices. A TSP that is an agronomist is likely to be qualified and certified to help with agronomic practices such as no-till or nutrient management. A TSP who is a Civil Engineer or an Ag Engineer is likely qualified to provide engineering assistance for practices such as an animal waste storage. Some companies have agronomists, nutrient management planners, and engineers and may be about to provide a whole suite of services.

Certification requires that the TSP show their college credits, other training, experience, and in some cases they need to show evidence of their work, and possibly references.

Except for specific state laws, all certification requirements are the same for every state. An exception would be where there is a state law. For example in WV, foresters must be certified by the state of WV to provide any kind of service for forestry. It is a state law, so in WV to be certified in TechReg, a state certification must be shown. In PA foresters are not required to have a state certification in forestry so in PA a forester only needs to show experience and evidence of success but not a state certification.

EQIP Contracts with funding to hire a TSP

There must be a specific cost line shown in the EQIP contract for a farmer to be reimbursed for work done by a TSP. That line item has a specific amount the farmer will be paid when the practice is complete. There will be one line item amount shown for the materials, and dozer work, this is not a TSP line item, and another line item amount shown for the TSP. If there is no line item for the TSP, the farmer will either receive technical assistance from an NRCS employee or they will pay for the technical assistance entirely on their own.

If there is a line item, the EQIP contract holder will go to the TechReg website, sort by the conservation practice they need technical assistance for, and choose a TSP. The farmer will contact and negotiate a price for the work. It may be less or more than the amount NRCS will pay. Once the work is completed, the farmer will be paid the set amount agreed to by NRCS and then the farmer will pay the TSP. Often times the NRCS payment does not cover all the costs negotiated with the TSP.

The most common TSP work items in Pennsylvania are Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) and Forest Management Plans.

Who decides who will provide the Technical Assistance?

First, NRCS has to determine if there is funding to hire a TSP to do the work

If the funds are available, then the farmer holding the EQIP contract can decide if they want NRCS or a TSP to provide the service.

What are the advantages for having TSPs do the work NRCS ordinarily does?

There will be more trained professionals to do conservation work.

Farmers may get faster service if it is a peak work load time for NRCS and a TSP is available.

Some farmers have developed a professional relationship with a TSP and they want to continue that professional relationship with through there EQIP contract.

How many TSPs are there?

About 250, but only about 50 are regularly providing services. The others may have lost interest, found it's not as lucrative as they would like, or just decided to get the certification because professional certifications are good for their resume.

Questions