

SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Summary

This position provides assistance in the development, planning, contracting and application of land conservation practices and programs.

Locations will be Negotiable within the states of Nebraska, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Indiana & Missouri only. Applicants interested in duty locations not specifically listed on the announcement are encouraged to communicate location availability during the interview stage.

[Learn more about this agency](#)

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This job is open to

- [Career transition \(CTAP, ICTAP, RPL\)](#)
Federal employees who meet the definition of a "surplus" or "displaced" employee.
- [The public](#)
U.S. Citizens, Nationals or those who owe allegiance to the U.S.

Clarification from the agency

Career transition (CTAP, ICTAP, RPL) and the public.

Videos

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Duties

- Assist in gathering and assembling preliminary data for all resource concerns for use in developing complete basic farm conservation plans, including conducting engineering surveys and preparing drawings for conservation practices common to the area.
- Utilize Toolkit/Protracts programs in the documentation and management of conservation plans and technical assistance by the service center.
- Carry out a follow-up schedule for applying soil conservation practices in accordance with plan and contract schedules.
- Work with District Conservationists to conduct environmental education on natural resource issues, water quality, and general conservation.

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Requirements

Conditions of Employment

- You must be a US Citizen or US National.
- Males born after 12/31/1959 must be Selective Service registered or exempt.
- Subject to satisfactory adjudication of background investigation and/or fingerprint check. If selected you will be sent instructions on obtaining fingerprints. Please note we are not able to reimburse any fees incurred for fingerprints.
- Successful completion of one-year probationary period, unless previously served.
- Direct Deposit – Per Public Law 104-134 all Federal employees are required to have federal payments made by direct deposit to their financial institution.
- Successfully pass the E-Verify employment verification check. To learn more about E-Verify, including your rights and responsibilities, visit E-Verify at <https://www.e-verify.gov/>.
- Must possess and maintain a valid state motor vehicle operator's license for the type of vehicle(s) operated to perform the duties of this position.
- Incumbent is required to obtain Conservation Planning Level certification.

Qualifications

Applicants must meet all qualifications and eligibility requirements by the closing date of the announcement including specialized experience and/or education, as defined below.

Basic Education Requirement:

Degree: soil conservation or related agricultural or natural resource discipline such as agronomy, soil science, forestry, agricultural education, or agricultural engineering. The study must have included 30 semester hours in a natural resource or agricultural field, including at least 12 semester hours in a combination of soils and crops or plant science. Of the 12 semester hours, a minimum of 3 semester hours must have been in soils and 3 semester hours in crops or plant science;

OR

Combination of Education and Experience: At least 30 semester hours in one or more of the disciplines as shown above, including at least 12 semester hours in a combination of soils and crops or plant science, plus appropriate experience or additional education comparable to a 4 year degree. Of the 12 semester hours, a minimum of 3 semester hours must have been in soils and 3 semester hours in crops or plant science.

Evaluation of Education: Education that provided specialized knowledge and skills in soil and water conservation is more valuable than education that imparted broad but general knowledge and skills. Courses in soil fertility, soil chemistry, soil genesis, plant physiology, plant science, and field crops are examples of specialized courses that contribute towards meeting the required 12 semester hours as described above. Courses in the physical sciences or engineering such as geology, civil engineering, and hydrology also meet the soils, crops, or plant science course requirements where such courses included a complete introduction to the physical, chemical, and biological properties of soils.

Evaluation of Experience: Experience that included the application of techniques, principles, and methods from a variety of agricultural and natural resource fields is appropriate, given the interdisciplinary character of the soil conservation occupation. For example, experience gained in a specialized field such as soil science, forestry, or agronomy is as fully acceptable as experience directly obtained in soil conservation work.

Applicants who meet the Basic Requirement above qualify for the GS-05 level. In addition to meeting one of the Basic Requirements listed above, applicants must meet the following Minimum Qualifications Requirement in order to be considered for the respective grade levels listed below:

Specialized Experience to qualify for the GS-07 level: You must have at least one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-5 level or higher in the Federal service (or private sector equivalent) demonstrating experience and knowledge of the application of routine principles, concepts and methodology associated with natural resources, practical experience assisting in providing routine technical advice in soil conservation plans while meeting deadlines and priorities in which any deviations or problems are referred to the supervisor;

OR

Superior Academic Achievement in a *bachelor's degree* curriculum directly related to the work of the position. To qualify for superior academic achievement, you must have ONE of the following: (1) standing in the upper third of your college class or major subdivision at the time you apply; (2) grade point average of B (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) or its equivalent for all courses completed, either (a) at the time of application or (b) during the last 2 years of your undergraduate curriculum; (3) B+ (3.5 on a 4.0 scale) or its equivalent for all courses completed in a related discipline, either (a) at the time of application or (b) during the last 2 years of your undergraduate curriculum; OR (4) election to membership in one of the national honorary

scholastic societies that meets the requirements of the Association of College Honor Society;

OR

Substitution of education in lieu of specialized experience for the GS-07 level: Possess one year of *graduate level education* in soil conservation or a related agricultural or natural resource discipline such as agronomy, soil science, forestry, agricultural education, or agricultural engineering; **OR**

Combination of Education and Experience: A combination of *graduate-level education and experience*, as described above, may be used to qualify for this position. This combination must have equipped you with the necessary knowledge and/or experience to successfully perform the duties of this position. Combinations of experience and education must total at least 100% as outlined in OPM Qualifications policy.

Specialized Experience to qualify for the GS-09 level: You must possess at least one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-07 level or higher in Federal service, or comparable experience not gained through Federal service demonstrating experience and knowledge of the application of the principles, concepts and methodology associated with natural resources. For this position specialized experience is defined as experience independently providing technical advice to address soil and water resource concerns and implement conservation planning. Examples of specialized experience include:

- Demonstrating experience applying conventional and established conservation methods and techniques to maintain or improve production while conserving soil and water resources.
- Developing natural resource conservation plans for land owners, conservation groups or units of local government involving a variety of soil patterns and conservation practices such as contours, terraces, tilling, diversions, etc.
- Identification and inventory of natural resources by obtaining physical data on multiple land uses such as crop history, soil erosion data, drainage characteristics, field arrangement, problem areas, land use data, and conservation practices present.
- Assisting in the evaluation of onsite urban, rural, or wetland conservation needs and applying land treatment measures including the installation of erosion and water control practices; **OR**

Substitution of education in lieu of specialized experience for the GS-09 level: Possess 2 year(s) of progressively higher level *graduate education* leading to a master's degree or master's or equivalent graduate degree in soil conservation or a related agricultural or natural resource discipline such as agronomy, soil science, forestry, agricultural education, or agricultural engineering;

OR

Combination of Education and Experience: A combination of *graduate-level education and experience*, as described above, may be used to qualify for this position. This combination must

have equipped you with the necessary knowledge and/or experience to successfully perform the duties of this position. Combinations of experience and education must total at least 100% as outlined in OPM Qualifications policy.

For more information on the qualifications for this position, click here: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/general-schedule-qualification-standards/#url=GS-PROF>

Experience refers to paid and unpaid experience, including volunteer work done through National Service programs (e.g., Peace Corps, AmeriCorps) and other organizations (e.g., professional; philanthropic; religious; spiritual; community, student, social). Volunteer work helps build critical competencies and can provide valuable training and experience that translates directly to paid employment. You will receive credit for all qualifying experience, including volunteer experience.

Education

If you are relying on your education to meet qualification requirements:

You must submit a copy of your transcripts to include course number, title, completion and grade. Education must be accredited by an accrediting institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order for it to be credited towards qualifications. Therefore, provide only the attendance and/or degrees from [schools accredited by accrediting institutions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education](#). If a relevant course is not clearly qualifying (e.g. special topic, seminar, research, thesis, obscure or misleading course title, etc.), please submit an official course syllabi and/or detailed course description from the university/college for that particular course to ensure you are properly evaluated. Please note that qualifications determinations are based solely on the information submitted for each particular vacancy announcement.

Important: If you are using foreign education to meet qualification requirements, you must send a Certificate of Foreign Equivalency with your transcript in order to receive credit for that education. Click on this [link](#) for more information.

Failure to provide all of the required documents/information as stated in this vacancy announcement may result in an ineligible rating or may affect the overall rating.

Additional information

- Applicants will be limited to 5 locations.
- **Additional Selections:** Selecting Officials may consider applicants in locations not listed in this Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA). Applicants should apply to the locations in each state(s) that is listed in this announcement, location will be discussed during interviews to assess interest in other areas within the state(s) of interest.

- Locality Pay: The salary for each location may vary depending on locality. Locality tables may be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>.
- Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP), Reemployment Priority List (RPL), or Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP): Visit the [OPM](#) website for information on how to apply as a CTAP, RPL, or ICTAP eligible. To exercise selection priority for this vacancy, CTAP/RPL/ICTAP candidates must meet the basic eligibility requirements and all selective factors. CTAP/ICTAP candidates must be rated and determined to be well qualified (or above) based on an evaluation of the competencies listed in the How You Will Be Evaluated section. When assessed through a score-based category rating method, CTAP/ICTAP applicants must receive a rating of at least 85 out of a possible 100.
- Promotion Potential: If you are selected for a position with further promotion potential, you will be placed under a career development plan, and may be non-competitively promoted if you successfully complete the requirements and if recommended by management. However, promotion is neither implied nor guaranteed.
- Physical Demands: The work requires regular and recurring physical exertion related to conservation work requiring walking on rough terrain, jumping ditches and furrows, or climbing steep banks and similar activities.
- Work Environment: The work involves regular and recurring exposure to operating agricultural equipment including tractors, caterpillars and a wide variety of attached implements such as cultivators, discs, plows, etc. There may be exposure to snow and ice conditions, and herbicide and chemical spray operations requiring safety precautions. Protective gear and clothing such as hard hat, boots, and gloves may be necessary.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** In the interest of filling these positions as efficiently as possible, we are requiring the following:
 - If called for an interview, applicants must be available to interview within 3 business days of being contacted.
 - If a tentative job offer is extended, selectee will have 2 business days in which to accept or decline.
- This position is eligible for telework within the local commuting area of the position and other flexible work arrangements. Current USDA policy includes telework for an 8 hour work day, 4 days per week; other flexibilities are possible dependent upon availability and/or the position and its associated duties. Employee participation is at the discretion of the supervisor.
- Recruitment and/or relocation incentives may be authorized.

[Close](#)

- Benefits

How You Will Be Evaluated

You will be evaluated for this job based on how well you meet the qualifications above.

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Delegated Examining Procedures and USDA policy using category rating. Applicants who meet basic minimum qualifications will be placed in one of *three* categories: Best Qualified, Well Qualified, or Qualified. Within these categories, applicants eligible for veteran's preference will receive selection priority over non-veterans. Category placement will be determined based on applicants' quality of experience and the extent they possess the following knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) or competencies:

- Attention to Detail
- Conservation Planning
- Oral Communication
- Technical Competence

Your application, including the online Assessment Questionnaire, will be reviewed to determine if you meet (a) minimum qualification requirements and (b) the resume supports the answers provided to the job-specific questions. Your resume must clearly support your responses to all the questions addressing experience and education relevant to this position. Those determined to be in the best qualified category will be referred to the selecting official for consideration.

Note: If, after reviewing your resume and/or supporting documentation, a determination is made that you have inflated your qualifications and or experience, your score may be adjusted to more accurately reflect your abilities, or you may be found ineligible. Please follow all instructions carefully. Errors or omissions may affect your rating. Providing inaccurate information on Federal documents could be grounds for non-selection or disciplinary action up to including removal from the Federal service.

Clicking the link below will present a preview of the application form; i.e. the online questionnaire. The application form link below will only provide a preview and does not initiate the application process. To initiate the online application process, click the "Apply" button to the right.

To view the application form, visit: <https://apply.usastaffing.gov/ViewQuestionnaire/12437971>
[Help](#)

Required Documents

The following documents are required for your applicant package to be complete. Our office cannot be responsible for incompatible software, your system failure, etc. Encrypted documents will not be accepted. Failure to submit required, legible documents may result in loss of consideration.

- Resume that includes: 1) personal information such as name, address, contact information; 2) education; 3) detailed work experience related to this position as described in the

major duties including work schedule, hours worked per week, dates of employment; title, series, grade (if applicable); 4) other qualifications.

- If education is required or you are using education to qualify, you must submit a copy of your college transcripts. An unofficial copy is sufficient with the application if it includes your name and the necessary course information; however, if you are selected, you will be required to submit official transcripts prior to entering on duty. Education must have been successfully obtained from an accredited school, college or university. If any education was completed at a foreign institute, you must submit with your application evidence that the institute was appropriately accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as equivalent to U.S. education standards. There are private organizations that specialize in this evaluation and a fee is normally associated with this service. For a list of private organizations that evaluate education, visit the [NACES](#) website. All transcripts must be in English or include an English translation.
- If claiming veteran's preference, you must submit a DD214, Certificate of Release from Active Duty, which shows dates of service and discharge under honorable conditions. If currently on active duty you must submit a certification of expected discharge or release from active duty service under honorable conditions not later than 120 days after the date the certification is submitted. Veteran's preference must be verified prior to appointment. Without this documentation, you will not receive veteran's preference and your application will be evaluated based on the material(s) submitted.
- If claiming 10-point veteran's preference you must provide the DD214 or certification requirements (see above bullet), plus the proof of entitlement of this preference as listed on the SF-15 Application for 10-point Veterans' Preference. The SF-15 should be included but is not required. Failure to submit these documents could result in the determination that there is insufficient documentation to support your claim for 10-point preference. For more information on veterans' preference visit [FEDSHIREVETS](#)
- Surplus or displaced employees eligible for CTAP, RPL, or ICTAP priority must provide: proof of eligibility (RIF separation notice, notice of proposed removal for declining a transfer of function or directed reassignment to another commuting area, notice of disability annuity termination), SF-50 documenting separation (as applicable), and your most recent SF-50 noting position, grade level, and duty location with your application per 5 CFR 330.

If you are relying on your education to meet qualification requirements:

Education must be accredited by an accrediting institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order for it to be credited towards qualifications. Therefore, provide only the attendance and/or degrees from schools accredited by accrediting institutions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Failure to provide all of the required information as stated in this vacancy announcement may result in an ineligible rating or may affect the overall rating.

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How to Apply

Please read the entire announcement and all instructions before you begin. You must complete this application process and submit all required documents electronically by 11:59p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on the closing date of this announcement.

Applying online is highly encouraged. We are available to assist you during business hours (normally 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m., Monday - Friday). If applying online poses a hardship, contact the Agency Contact listed below well before the closing date for an alternate method. All hardship application packages must be complete and submitted no later than noon ET on the closing date of the announcement in order to be entered into the system prior to its closing.

This agency provides reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities on a case-by-case basis; contact the Agency Contact to request this.

To begin, click "Apply" and follow the instructions to complete the Assessment Questionnaire and attach your resume and all required documents.

NOTE: If a document is resubmitted, it replaces the previous submission, which means the previous document is no longer available to the Human Resources Office. If you are adding to, rather than replacing a previous submission, you must upload both the old document and the new document. You must verify that uploaded documents from USAJOBS transfer into the Agency's staffing system as there is a limitation to the number of documents that can be transferred. However, once in the Agency's staffing system, you will have the opportunity to upload additional documents. Applicants may combine all like required documents (e.g. SF-50s or veteran docs) into one or more files and scan for uploading into the application. Each file must not exceed 3MB. Grouping like documents into files will simplify the application process. Documents must be in one of the following formats: GIF, JPEG, JPG, PDF, PNG, RTF, or Word (DOC or DOCX). Uploaded documents may not require a password, digital signature, or other encryption to open.