
Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual

Part 504 – Technical Service Provider Assistance

Subpart A – General Information

Amended December 2023

504.0 Purpose

- A. This manual contains the NRCS policy for the Technical Service Provider (TSP) Program. A TSP refers to an individual, entity (business, nonprofit, or similar organization), Indian tribe, or public agency who is either:
1. Certified by NRCS and on the approved list to provide technical services to participants;
or
 2. Selected by the Department to implement conservation programs covered by this part through a procurement contract, contribution agreement, or cooperative agreement with the Department.

504.1 References

A. Statutory Authorities

The Food Security Act of 1985, as codified in [16 U.S.C. § 3842](#), requires the Secretary to deliver technical assistance to eligible participants for implementation of its Title XII programs and the conservation activities in the Agricultural Management Assistance Program either directly, through an agreement with a third-party provider, or at the option of the producer through payment to the producer for an approved third-party provider.

B. Program Regulation and Delegation

1. In [7 C.F.R § 2.43\(a\)\(13\)\(xiii\)](#), the Chief of NRCS has the authority to deliver technical assistance under section 1242 of the Food Security Act of 1985 ([16 U.S.C. § 3842](#)), including the approval of persons or entities outside of USDA to provide technical services.
2. The Chief of NRCS defines how a participant acquires technical service from a third-party TSP, sets forth a certification and decertification process, and establishes a method to make payments for technical services ([7 CFR pt. 652](#)).
3. The director of the Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance Division (CPTAD) has been delegated the leadership of the TSP Program through developing and maintaining this national TSP policy ([130 GM § 400.13\(J\)\(3\)](#)).

504.2 Policy

A. Objective

1. TSPs are individuals, entities (business, nonprofit organization, or similar organization), Indian tribes, or public agencies either:
 - a. Certified by NRCS to provide technical services to participants; or
 - b. Selected by NRCS to assist with implementing conservation programs covered by Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 through a procurement contract, contribution agreement, or cooperative agreement with NRCS.
2. TSPs may provide technical services to eligible participants in conservation planning, education and outreach, and assistance with design and implementation of conservation practices applied on private, Indian, or public land when allowed by conservation program rules.

B. Scope

The TSP Program may be implemented in any of the 50 states, District of Columbia, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

C. Ethics

1. Current and former NRCS employees must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations regarding (but not limited to) outside employment, post-government employment, conflicting financial interests, impartiality in performing official duties, and misuse of position. Direct questions concerning ethics to the [Office of Ethics](#).
2. NRCS employees may not work as TSPs.
3. NRCS employees may not use or allow the use of their title or authority to recommend any specific TSP.
4. NRCS employees must not disclose non-publicly available information and participant lists to TSPs.
5. Non-USDA federal employees should consult their agency or departmental ethics office to ensure adherence to the ethics rules and responsibilities.
6. Conservation partners are not subject to the federal ethics rules. However, agreements, all memorandums of understanding, and other instruments between NRCS and a conservation partner must state that the conservation partner may not carry out TSP-associated operations on NRCS property or use NRCS resources or information systems for TSP activities.

504.3 Definitions

- A. Definitions that apply to this manual and all documents in accordance with TSP regulation are found in [7 CFR § 652.2](#).
- B. In this manual—

1. “State conservationist” (STC) means state conservationists and the directors of the Caribbean and Pacific Islands areas, and
2. “Days” means calendar days.

504.4 Responsibilities

- A. The Chief of NRCS is responsible for—
 1. Directing and supervising the administration of applicable technical services.
 2. Receiving appeals to decertification and issuing a written determination.
- B. The deputy chief for Programs (DCP) is responsible for—
 1. Ensuring that NRCS program funds are allocated, obligated, and dispersed in a timely and legally appropriate manner.
 2. Receiving contests to decertification and issuing a written determination on the decision to decertify or not decertify.
- C. Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance Division (CPTAD) director is responsible for—
 1. Providing leadership for the TSP Program in
 - c. developing and maintaining national policy.
 - d. developing TSP agreements with organizations.
 - e. providing outreach materials.
 - f. ensuring web-based tools and materials are available for TSPs to carry out assistance activities.
 - g. other aspects of TSP implementation as set forth in this manual.
 2. Providing training to ensure that persons meet the certification criteria for certain technical expertise when there is a lack of training resources outside the agency for such expertise. Any training provided by NRCS must be limited to training about USDA regulations, policies, procedures, processes, and business and technical tools unique to NRCS.
 3. Establishing a process for verifying information provided to NRCS, certifying TSPs, and processing technical services provided by TSPs.
 4. Establishing a TSP Program Branch, that, at a minimum, includes a branch chief, a national TSP program manager, regional TSP certifiers, and regional TSP coordinators.
- D. The TSP Program Branch chief is responsible for—

Implementing the TSP Program responsibilities of the CPTAD director and supervising the TSP Program Branch staff.
- E. The national TSP program manager is responsible for—
 1. Managing the national and state-level TSP certification criteria on the [TSP public webpage](#).
 2. Managing the decertification process of TSPs.

3. Receiving reports from TSPs on conservation accomplishments.
- F. The regional TSP certifiers are responsible for—
1. Determining if an individual, entity, public agency, or tribe meets the certification criteria and requirements.
 2. Entering into certification agreements on behalf of NRCS and certifying TSP applicants.
 3. Receiving lists of individuals from recommending organizations.
- G. The regional TSP coordinators are responsible for—
1. Reviewing TSP applications for completeness and adherence to national criteria.
 2. Consulting with STCs, through their state TSP program coordinators (SPC), for the state-level review of TSP applications.
- H. The STCs are responsible for—
1. Implementing agency policies and managing conservation programs, technology transfers, operations management, quality assurance, and administrative operations.
 2. Administering the TSP Program within their area of responsibility in compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, and policies.
 3. Annually updating state-level requirements for TSP certification of specific practices or categories of technical services.
 4. Appointing an SPC.
- I. The SPCs are responsible for—
1. Duties as assigned by the STC to administer the TSP Program in compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, and policies.
 2. Serving as the primary state point of contact for the TSP Program.

Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual

Part 504 – Technical Service Provider Assistance

Subpart B – TSP Certification and Decertification

Amended December 2023

504.10 Certification Criteria and Requirements

- A. To certify an individual, an NRCS regional TSP certifier or a certifying recommending organization must determine that the individual:
 - 1. Has the required technical training, education, and experience to perform the level of technical assistance for which certification is sought;
 - 2. Meets any applicable professional or business licensing or similar qualification standards established by state or tribal law;
 - 3. Demonstrates, through documentation of training or experience, familiarity with NRCS guidelines, criteria, standards, and specifications as set forth in the applicable NRCS manuals, handbooks, field office technical guides, and their supplements for the planning and applying of specific conservation practices and management systems for which certification is sought; and
 - 4. Is not a decertified TSP at the time of application.
- B. To certify an entity or public agency, a regional TSP certifier must determine that the entity or public agency is authorized to provide technical services in the jurisdiction and have a certified individual providing such services on its behalf.
- C. A TSP, as part of the certification, must enter into a certification agreement with NRCS through a regional TSP certifier. The agreement specifies the terms and conditions of the certification, such as requirements that the TSP must adhere to. By entering into the agreement, the TSP acknowledges that failing to meet these requirements may result in ineligibility to receive payments from NRCS (either directly or through the participant) for the technical services provided or in decertification. Certification agreements may not exceed 3 years.
- D. The CPTAD director, in consultation with the division directors of Conservation Engineering and Ecological Sciences and through the national TSP program manager, must annually update and maintain the TSP certification criteria on the national TSP public webpage. State conservationists must provide the national TSP program manager any state-level requirements for TSP certification of specific practices or categories of technical services. A list of these state-level requirements will be maintained on the national TSP public webpage.

504.11 Certification Process

A. Individual Certification

1. To be considered for certification as TSP, an individual must:
 - a. Apply for certification and provide the required documentation to NRCS using the application method specified on the national TSP public webpage; or
 - b. Request certification through a recommending organization.
2. New certification applications may not exceed 10 states. Subsequent modification applications may add states.
3. A regional TSP coordinator must review the application for completeness and national criteria and consult with the applicable state conservationists through their state TSP program coordinators. A state conservationist may request that a TSP not be certified for a conservation practice or activity in their area of responsibility for the following reasons.
 - a. The TSP does not meet state-level certification criteria for the specific practice or activity; or
 - b. The sample of work does not demonstrate a familiarity with NRCS guidelines, criteria, standards, and specifications as set forth in the applicable NRCS manuals, handbooks, and field office technical guides for the conservation practices and management systems that the TSP is seeking certification for.
4. Upon request of the regional TSP coordinator, TSPs must submit copies of all transcripts, licensing, and certification documentation.
5. Within 60 days of NRCS receiving a complete application from an individual, a regional TSP certifier must make a determination to certify or defer each technical service (practice or activity) on the application. If all requirements are met, the regional TSP certifier will:
 - a. Enter into a certification agreement on behalf of NRCS and certify the applicant as qualified to provide technical services for specific practices or categories of technical service;
 - b. Place the applicant on the list of certified TSPs; and
 - c. Make available to the public the list of certified TSPs by practice or category of technical services.

B. Alternative Application Process for Individual Certification

1. There are two types of TSP recommending organizations.
 - a. Identifying recommending organization – an organization that identifies TSP candidates and recommends NRCS certification to a regional TSP certifier.
 - (1) The CPTAD director may enter into an agreement, including a memorandum of understanding or other appropriate instrument, with an identifying recommending organization that the CPTAD director determines has an accreditation program that trains, tests, and evaluates candidates for competency in particular areas of technical service delivery and that meets the certification criteria for the technical services to be provided.

- (2) Under the terms of an agreement with NRCS, an identifying recommending organization may provide a regional TSP certifier an identification list (i.e., a list of individuals it identifies as meeting NRCS certification criteria for specific practices or categories of technical service and recommends for certification).
 - b. Certifying recommending organization – also known as a third-party certifier, an organization that certifies TSP candidates on behalf of NRCS.
 - (1) The CPTAD director may enter into an agreement, including a memorandum of understanding or other appropriate instrument, with a certifying recommending organization that the CPTAD director determines has an adequate accreditation program to certify individuals as TSPs for specific practices or categories of technical services.
 - (2) Under the terms of an agreement with NRCS, a certifying recommending organization may provide a regional TSP certifier a certification list (i.e., a list of individuals it certifies as meeting NRCS certification criteria for specific practices or categories of technical service).
- 2. Under an agreement entered into with NRCS, all recommending organizations must:
 - a. Train, test, and evaluate candidates for competency in the area of technical service delivery;
 - b. Recommend to NRCS individuals who it determines meet the NRCS certification requirements for providing specific practices or categories of technical services;
 - c. Inform the recommended individuals that they must meet the certification requirements, including entering into a certification agreement with NRCS, in order to provide technical services;
 - d. Reassess individuals that request renewal of their certification; and
 - e. Notify NRCS of any concerns that may affect the organization’s recommendation concerning the individual’s certification, recertification, certification renewal, or technical service delivery.
- 3. Within 60 days of receiving an identification or certification list, a regional TSP certifier must make a determination on the recommendations of the identifying recommending organization or accept the certification of the certifying recommending organization. If the individuals meet all requirements for certification, NRCS will perform the certification actions in section 504.11(A)(5)(a) to (c).
- 4. The CPTAD director may terminate an agreement with a recommending organization if concerns with its accreditation program, its recommendations for certification, or other requirements under the agreement arise.
- 5. The TSP Program Branch will identify recommending organizations and their ability to identify or certify individuals as TSPs on its website.

C. Entity, Tribe, and Public Agency Certification

- 1. A private sector entity or public agency that applies for certification must provide supporting documentation that it has the required licensure for the jurisdiction it is applying for and that it employs at least one certified individual authorized to act on its behalf.

2. A regional TSP certifier must determine whether the individuals identified in the entity's application are certified for the specific services the entity wishes to provide, and, within 60 days of receiving an application, must make a determination to certify or defer each technical service (practice or activity) on the application. If all requirements for the entity are met, the regional TSP certifier will perform the certification actions described in section 504.11(A)(5)(a) to (c).
3. The certification agreement entered into with the entity must:
 - a. Identify the certified individuals who are authorized to perform technical services on behalf of the entity;
 - b. Require that the entity has, at all times, an individual who is a certified TSP authorized to act on the entity's behalf;
 - c. Require that the entity requests to amend the certification agreement within 30 days of any changes to the list of certified individuals employed by the entity;
 - d. Require that responsibility for any work performed by noncertified individuals be assumed by a certified individual authorized to act on the entity's behalf; and
 - e. Require that the entity be legally responsible for the work performed by any individual working for the entity under its certification.

504.12 Certification Renewal

- A. TSP certifications are in effect for the period specified in the certification agreement, not to exceed 3 years, and automatically expire unless they are renewed.
- B. A TSP may request renewal of an NRCS certification by:
 1. Submitting a complete certification renewal application to NRCS using the application method specified on the national TSP public webpage or through an applicable recommending organization to NRCS at least 60 days before the current certification expires;
 2. Verifying on the renewal form that the certification requirements are met; and
 3. Agreeing to abide by the terms and conditions of a certification agreement.
- C. Within 60 days of receiving a complete application, a regional TSP certifier must, in consultation with the applicable state conservationists through their state program coordinators, make a determination to certify or defer each technical service (practice or activity) on the renewal application. All certification renewals are in effect for the period specified in the certification agreement, not to exceed 3 years, and may be subsequently renewed before expiration.

504.13 Decertification

- A. To protect the public interest, NRCS maintains the certification of only TSPs who act professionally and responsibly in the provision of technical service, including meeting NRCS standards and specifications when providing technical services to conservation program participants.
- B. Causes for Decertification

1. The national TSP program manager or STCs in whose area a TSP is certified to provide technical services may propose to decertify the TSP for any of the following reasons:
 - a. Failing to meet NRCS standards and specifications while providing the technical services;
 - b. Violating the certification agreement (e.g., demonstrating a lack of understanding of, or an unwillingness or inability to implement, NRCS standards and specifications for a service the TSP is certified in; providing technical services the TSP is not certified in);
 - c. Engaging in coercion, fraud, or misrepresentation or providing incorrect or misleading information; or
 - d. Any other cause of a serious or compelling nature, as determined by NRCS, that demonstrates the TSP's inability to fulfill the terms of the certification agreement.

C. Decertification Process

1. Notice of Proposed Decertification

- a. A single STC or the national TSP program manager may propose decertification.
- b. Upon the decision by the national TSP program manager to approve the proposed decertification, the TSP will be formally notified by the state conservationist through the national TSP program manager. The notice must include –
 - (1) the causes for decertification;
 - (2) documentation supporting decertification; and
 - (3) notification that the TSP has opportunity to contest the decertification within 20 days of receiving the Notice of Proposed Decertification.
- c. When a private sector entity, business, tribe, or public agency is being notified of a proposed decertification, any certified individuals employed by such organization who are also being considered for decertification will receive a separate notice. The certified individuals will be given separate appeal rights.

2. Contesting a Notice of Proposed Decertification

To contest a proposed decertification, the certified TSP must submit in writing within 20 days the reasons why the deputy chief for Programs should not decertify the TSP, including any mitigating factors and supporting documentation.

3. Determination by Deputy Chief for Programs

- a. The deputy chief for Programs must issue a written determination within 40 days based on an administrative record that includes:
 - (1) The notice of proposed decertification and all supporting documentation; and
 - (2) The TSP's written response and supporting documentation.
- b. The written determination must be provided to the TSP and must include:
 - (1) The deputy chief for Programs' determination;
 - (2) The applicable administrative records; and
 - (3) Notification that the TSP has 20 days from the date of receipt to appeal the decertification to the Chief of NRCS.

4. Appealing a Decertification Determination

The TSP has the right to appeal, in writing and within 20 days, the determination to the Chief of NRCS. The written appeal must state the reasons for appeal and any arguments in support of those reasons. If the TSP fails to appeal, the decision of the deputy chief for Programs is final.

5. Final Determination by the Chief of NRCS

- a. The Chief or designee will make a final determination of decertification within 30 days of receipt of the TSP's written appeal. The final determination will be based on the administrative record and any additional information submitted by the TSP.
- b. The decision of the Chief or designee is final and not subject to further administrative review. The Chief's determination will include –
 - (1) the reasons for decertification;
 - (2) the period of decertification; and
 - (3) the scope of decertification.
- c. Upon decision to decertify by the Chief, the following will occur:
 - (1) The TSP's certification agreement will be terminated; and
 - (2) TSP's name will be added to the national TSP decertification list and will be removed from the list of certified providers.

D. Period of Decertification

The decertifying official decides the period of decertification, not to exceed 3 years, based on all relevant facts and reasons for decertification, including mitigating factors (if submitted by the TSP). During this time, the decertified TSP may seek mitigation and additional training to correct the reasons for decertification.

E. Effect of Decertification

1. NRCS will not make payment for any technical services provided by a decertified TSP.
2. NRCS will not procure the services of a decertified TSP during the period of decertification.
3. NRCS will maintain a list of decertified TSPs and remove decertified TSPs from the list of certified providers.
4. Decertification of a TSP in one state decertifies the provider in all areas covered by USDA programs.

504.14 Certification After Decertification

A decertified TSP may apply to be certified using the certification process in section 504.11 after the period of decertification has expired. A decertified TSP may not use the renewal process to be recertified immediately after being decertified.

Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual

Part 504 – Technical Service Provider Assistance

Subpart C – Acquisition and Delivery of Technical Services

Amended December 2023

504.20 General

- A. Eligible participants are producers, landowners, or entities that are participating or seeking to participate in a Farm Bill Title XII-covered conservation program in which the producer, landowner, or entity is otherwise eligible to participate. Participants may obtain technical assistance directly from NRCS or, when available, from a TSP.
- B. Written agreements are documents that specify the rights and obligations of any individual or entity that has been authorized by NRCS to receive conservation planning assistance without having a program contract.

NRCS may approve written agreements for technical assistance prior to program participation based on available funding and natural resource priorities as identified by the state conservationist. The technical assistance may include developing conservation plans or activity plans suitable for subsequent incorporation into a program contract.

504.21 Technical Service Standards

- A. All technical services provided by TSPs and paid for by NRCS must meet NRCS standards and specifications as set forth in state-specific field office technical guides, manuals, handbooks, guides, and other references for soils mapping and natural resources information, conservation planning, conservation practice application, and other areas of technical assistance.
- B. NRCS must approve all new technologies and innovative practices, including interim standards and specifications, before a TSP initiates technical services for those technologies and practices.
- C. In all agreements (cooperative, contribution, or certification), procurement contracts, or other appropriate instruments, the TSP must
 - 1. Assume responsibility, in writing, for the technical services provided and that all technical services provided will
 - a. Comply with all applicable federal, state, tribal, and local laws and requirements.
 - b. Meet applicable NRCS standards, specifications, and program requirements.
 - c. Be consistent with the conservation program goals and objectives for which the program contract was entered into by NRCS and the participant.

- d. Incorporate alternatives that are both cost-effective and appropriate to address the resource issues. Conservation alternatives will meet the objectives for the program and participant to whom assistance is provided.
 2. Be responsible for the technical services provided, including any costs, damages, claims, liabilities, and judgments arising from past, present, and future negligent or wrongful acts or omissions of the TSP in connection with the technical service provided.
 3. Include the collection and evaluation of special environmental concerns, such as wetlands, endangered species, or cultural or historic sites on and near the planning area (data needed for NRCS to complete an environmental evaluation worksheet).
 4. Report conservation accomplishments associated with the technical services to the Department and the participant as requested by the national TSP program manager.
- D. NRCS is not in breach of any program contract or written agreement if it fails to implement conservation plans or practices or make payment for conservation plans or practices resulting from technical services that do not meet NRCS standards and specifications or are not consistent with program requirements.
- E. The participant is responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of the program contract or written agreement, which includes meeting NRCS technical standards and specifications for any technical services provided by a TSP.
- F. To the extent allowed under state or tribal law, TSPs may use subcontractors to provide services or expertise needed by the TSP. If a participant needs technical services that a TSP is not certified to provide, the TSPs may subcontract other TSPs certified by NRCS for the technical service.

504.22 Participant Option to Acquire Technical Services from a Certified TSP

- A. When acquiring technical services from a certified TSP, eligible participants are responsible for—
1. Entering into a program contract or a written agreement before acquiring technical services from a certified TSP.
 2. Complying with the terms and conditions of the program contract or written agreement, which includes meeting USDA technical standards and specifications for any technical services provided by a TSP.
 3. Selecting a certified TSP from the approved list of TSPs.
 4. Submitting to NRCS valid invoices, supporting documentation, and requests for payment.
 5. Authorizing in writing to NRCS the disclosure of their records on file that they wish to make available to specific TSPs.
- B. Payment Requirements
1. NRCS will identify in the program contract or written agreement the payment provisions for TSPs hired directly by the participant.

2. NRCS does not make payments under a program contract or written agreement for technical services provided by a TSP unless the TSP is certified by NRCS for the services provided and is identified on the approved list.
3. NRCS will only pay a participant for technical services provided in accordance with established NRCS standards, specifications, and requirements.
4. Payments for technical services are made only one time for the same technical service provided unless, as determined by NRCS, the emergence of new technologies or major changes in the participant's farming or ranching operations requires additional technical services.
5. NRCS does not make payment for activities or services that are customarily provided at no cost by a TSP to a participant, as determined by the state conservationist.
6. When a participant acquires technical services from a TSP, NRCS is not a party to the agreement between the participant and the TSP. To ensure that quality implementation of the goals and objectives of the conservation programs are met, the TSP must be certified by NRCS and identified on the approved list.
7. The state conservationist must issue payment within 30 days of receiving participant-submitted invoices, supporting documentation, and requests for payment. The state conservationist may pay a participant for some or all of the costs associated with the technical services provided by a TSP hired by the participant or, upon receipt of an assignment of payment from the participant, pay the TSP directly.

C. Payment Rates for TSP Technical Services Acquired by Participants.

1. NRCS calculates TSP payment rates for technical services using national, regional, and local cost data.
2. NRCS establishes guidelines to analyze the local pricing information using a standardized method.
3. NRCS establishes TSP payment rates for the various categories of technical services. NRCS determines the rates according to NRCS regional and local cost data, procurement data, and market data.
4. The CPTAD director, in consultation with the Programs, Science and Technology, and Management and Strategy deputy areas, reviews and approves state payment rates to ensure consistency where similar resource conditions and agricultural operations exist. Payment rates may vary to some degree between or within states due to differences in state laws, the cost of doing business, competition, and other variables.
5. The CPTAD director, with recommendations from the Programs, Science and Technology, and Management and Strategy deputy areas, and state conservationists review payment rates every year or more frequently, as needed, and adjust the rates based upon data from existing procurement contracts, federal cost rates, and other appropriate sources.
6. State conservationists may adjust payment rates, as needed, on a case-by-case basis in response to unusual conditions or unforeseen circumstances in delivering technical

services such as highly complex technical situations, emergency conditions, serious threats to human health or the environment, or major resource limitations. In these cases, the state conservationist will set a case-specific TSP payment rate based on a determination of the scope, magnitude, and timeliness of the technical services needed.

504.23 Department Delivery of Technical Services

- A. To acquire technical assistance directly from NRCS, participants should contact their local USDA Service Center.
- B. NRCS may enter into a procurement contract, contribution agreement, cooperative agreement, or other appropriate instrument to:
 - 1. Receive assistance in providing technical assistance when implementing the conservation programs covered by this part; and
 - 2. Receive related technical assistance services that accelerate conservation program delivery. Related technical assistance services may include activities or services that facilitate the development, processing, or implementation of a program contract, such as recording conservation planning decisions and specifications.
- C. NRCS may enter into agreements with other agencies or with a non-federal entity to provide technical services to eligible participants.
- D. NRCS ensures that procurement contracts, contribution agreements, cooperative agreements, interagency agreements, or other appropriate instruments have qualification and performance criteria necessary to ensure quality implementation of these conservation programs. When NRCS obtains assistance from a TSP through a procurement contract, contribution agreement, cooperative agreement, interagency agreement, or other similar instrument, the TSP is authorized to provide technical services and receive payment even if such TSP is not NRCS-certified, nor identified on the approved list of certified TSPs.
- E. NRCS will implement procurement contracts, contribution agreements, cooperative agreements, and other appropriate instruments in accordance with applicable federal acquisition or USDA federal assistance rules and requirements for competency, quality, and selection, as appropriate. Any contract, contribution agreement, cooperative agreement, or other appropriate instrument entered into under this section will be for a minimum of 1 year, will not exceed 3 years in duration, and may be renewed upon mutual agreement of the parties.
- F. A TSP may not receive payment twice for the same technical service, such as once from a participant through a program contract or written agreement and then again through a separate contract or agreement made directly with the Department.
- G. The CPTAD director ensures, to the extent practicable, that the amounts paid for technical service under this part are consistent across conservation program areas, unless specific conservation program requirements include additional tasks.

504.24 Quality Assurance of Technical Services

- A. NRCS reviews, in consultation with the other agencies when appropriate, the quality of the technical services provided by TSPs. At minimum, technical services provided by TSPs will be spot-checked according to NRCS agency policy ([450 GM § 407.20\(D\)](#)). As a requirement of certification, TSPs must develop and maintain documentation in accordance with NRCS manuals, handbooks, and technical guidance for the technical services provided and provide this documentation to NRCS and the participant when the technical service is completed. NRCS may use information from its quality assurance process, documentation submitted by the TSP, and other relevant information in determining how to improve the quality of technical service, as well as whether to decertify a TSP.
- B. Upon discovery of a deficiency in the provision of technical service through its quality assurance process or other means, NRCS will, to the greatest extent practicable, send a notice to the TSP detailing the deficiency and requesting remedial action. Failure by the TSP to fix the deficiency within 30 days may trigger the decertification process. Repeated deficiencies may also trigger the decertification process. A failure by NRCS to identify a deficiency does not affect any action under the decertification process. TSPs are responsible for providing technical services that meet all NRCS standards and specifications.