

Position Description

Social Sciences Coordinators

Draft

A. Introduction

Social Sciences Coordinators (SSCs) provide support to the agency's social science activities and the Social Sciences Institute's efforts to help develop/acquire/translate and transfer practical social sciences technology that addresses human behaviors associated with ensuring the productive, equitable, and environmentally sound use and conservation of our global natural resources.

SSCs identify social sciences related needs of the field and provide product and service recommendations to the Social Sciences Institute.

SSCs strengthen locally led conservation initiatives by encouraging field staff to utilize social sciences products, services and tools in order to reach out and engage new partners; to identify key issues and needs; and to involve these partners in implementing conservation initiatives. Coordinators also attempt to remove barriers to participation by non-traditional and underserved customers and partners.

B. Major Duties

1. Coordinate or assist with the development and coordination of social science technology products either through individual initiatives or by working in work groups/teams.
2. Provide feedback to the Social Sciences Institute on a regular basis regarding products, ideas, suggestions, and concerns.
3. Network with the Social Sciences Institute staff member assigned to your state/region.
4. Work with the State/Regional Conservationist and others to identify and meet the social sciences needs of the field staff.
5. Recommend, coordinate, assist in the development, and implement social sciences training as needs arise.
6. Post the SSI brochure and Product Catalog in a prominent place in your state/region/other office.
7. As appropriate, provide brief overviews of social sciences activities, products and services at state office and/or staff meetings. Inform staff of product availability in hard and electronic copies. Provide regular updates at meetings.

8. Publicize the home page address of the SSI. Most of the SSI's products are up on the Home Page and can be downloaded. Additionally, there are many social sciences web connections on this page. The address of the home page is
<http://people.nrcs.wisc.edu/socsciinstitute/>
9. Keep field staff informed of products, activities and initiatives of social science related activities through appropriate mediums (e.g., VoiceCom, e-mail, phone, newsletter, mail, etc.)
10. Work with your state public affairs specialist to promote social sciences products and services in your state publication and other venues such as the publications of partners.
11. As appropriate, exhibit social science activities and products in the state/regional office or at state meetings. (A locally led conservation exhibit from the Social Sciences Institute is available for loan.)
12. As appropriate, provide technical assistance to field staff on social science activities in your state or region.
13. Ensure distribution of social sciences products is universal within your jurisdiction. Make yourself available to respond to any questions. Warehouse extra products for future delivery.

Factor 1. Knowledge Required by the Position

- Knowledge of community relations, economics, other social sciences and technology transfer principles, methods, practices, and techniques.
- Knowledge of communications, marketing, community organization development, coalition building, and technology transfer strategies and tactics that will result in meeting field office and partnership customer needs and achieve the NRCS strategic initiatives.
- Knowledge and skill to advise others in the NRCS on issues involving social sciences practices particularly as they relate to locally led conservation.
- Ability to communicate with others in order to serve as a technical authority in community outreach/locally led conservation and technology transfer initiatives and to advise the Social Sciences Institute of field office needs.
- Ability to plan, execute, and evaluate community outreach/locally led conservation, social sciences, and technology transfer programs in order to insure that agency initiatives are met.

Factor 2. Supervisory Controls

A SSC is a collateral duty and he/she is assigned this responsibility. The SSCs regular supervisor should consider the work of the SSC in this area during evaluation periods as it complements the agency's strategic plan and overall mission of the NRCS.

Factor 3. Guidelines

Policy guidance is found in Congressional Acts, Federal regulations, policy statements from the Secretary of Agriculture, Executive Orders, and NRCS established policy. The incumbent must exercise creativity to develop procedures that meet the needs of the agency, its customers, and existing laws and regulations. Incumbent receives broad assignments and is given authority to complete these assignments. The incumbent must follow the rules of sound science so that analyses and recommendations are based on valid and reliable information and data.

Factor 4. Complexity

The dynamic interaction of physical, social, psychological, cultural, political, legal, and economic factors create a highly complex, uncertain work environment. Within this environment the incumbent must apply ingenuity, innovation, originality, and creativity in the design, development, and implementation of procedures and policies to solve the nation's environmental problems within the context of NRCS' policies, rules, regulations, authorities, and budget. The incumbent is responsible for developing and transferring social science technologies and data that address social issues and concerns, yet are flexible enough to apply to diverse natural resource settings, crops, communities, ecosystems, farm financial endowments, and farmer management skill levels.

Factor 5. Scope and Effect

The incumbent input for the agency's social science technical activities in the area of sociology and social survey research, focus group analyses, and demographic data analysis in combination with spatial natural resource data. The incumbent is responsible for these social science activities within the Social Science Institute as they relate to agency programs and activities and their impacts. In addition, the incumbent provides social science guidance to regional conservationists, and to state conservationists and their staffs, and through them to all operating levels of the NRCS. Broad and complex problems are involved in the various phases of these activities as they relate to a coordinated national natural resource conservation program. The implementation activities takes place under an extremely wide variety of conditions directly affecting individuals and groups of farmers and ranchers, small watersheds, municipal watersheds, and urban properties. The development of social science technologies, impact assessment, and evaluation activities are basic to sound national and international natural resource conservation programs.

The Incumbent assesses the adequacy of existing social science technologies, analyzes a range of influences, develops alternatives for action, implements decided upon actions, and assesses results in difficult and highly complex situations. These decisions affect the social well being of the agencies' customers and their quality of life.

Factor 6. Personal Contacts

The incumbent maintains a close working relationship with the Social Science Institute liaison and the Director. The incumbent also maintains close relationships with numerous other federal, state, and private agencies; Land Grant Colleges and other colleges and universities; experiment station staff and other research organizations; state, national, and local soil conservation district associations; representatives of state and local governments; national farm organizations; professional groups interested in natural resource conservation and related fields; technical societies and organizations and groups.

Factor 7. Purpose of Contacts

Contacts are made for the purpose of developing and transferring social science technology and building alliances to further the mission of NRCS. Contacts ensure that NRCS and other Federal and State natural resources programs operate with sound scientific information. Other purposes of contacts are to obtain and disseminate information, establish cooperative work relationships, exchange data and scientific information, plan studies and work activities, and formulate procedures to implement NRCS programs on a consistent and equitable basis. Coordination of widely divergent views between experts in many technical fields and administrative levels is an absolute necessity in discharging the duties of this position.

Factor 8. Physical Demands

The work is primarily sedentary. However, intermittent physical exertion such as walking over steep and rough terrain could occur. Timelines and pressures to develop useful products require the incumbent to deal successfully with stressful situations.

Factor 9. Work Environment

The work is performed primarily in an office setting. The incumbent is expected to perform all duties in a safe manner so as not to endanger self, others, or property.

Annual Results (Suggestions)

The conservation partnership is broadened and strengthened and the quality of conservation assistance delivered to all customers is improved as a result of field staff adapting social sciences technology. Specifically,

- The number of field staff and partners who are aware of the Social Sciences Institute and its mission, vision, and products is increased to 100% of all NRCS staff by September 30, 1999.
- The number of field staff and partners applying, utilizing, and adopting Social Sciences Institute products and services will increase to 50% of all NRCS staff by September 30, 2002.
- The relationship between the Social Sciences Institute and the NRCS field, regional and other staff is strengthened. Social Sciences Coordinators and their Social Sciences Institute liaison will communicate on a as needed basis.
- At least once annually, at the request of the Social Sciences Institute, social sciences coordinators will provide their Social Sciences Institute liaison with social sciences related field needs and any recommendations to meet those needs.