



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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To Be Sent Via Electronic Mail

January 21, 2004

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-04-11

SUBJECT: LTP – EQIP – 2004 Program

Purpose. To initiate the 2004 EQIP and Local and Area Work Group process.

Expiration Date. September 31, 2004.

As in FY2003, NRCS District Conservationists will use Local Work Groups (LWG) as part of the locally-led process to formulate and implement a local FY 2004 EQIP program. Currently we have not established a cut-off date for scoring and ranking applications. Neither do we have an EQIP funding allocation for the state. Nevertheless, offices can and should proceed to establish the foundation of their 2004 EQIP. Offices should expect the 2004 EQIP to be very similar to the 2003 EQIP.

2004 EQIP Action Items:

1. **Accept EQIP applications** at any time (Field Offices (FO)). Use the planning process to assist the applicant to develop a conservation plan which includes the practices that may be funded under an EQIP contract. All EQIP applicants should be entered into ProTracts. Basic applicant information can be entered into ProTracts regardless of whether a final 2004 program is set.
2. **Enter plans** into Toolkit (FO). Plans entered into Toolkit can be easily uploaded into ProTracts. All EQIP contracts will be recorded into ProTracts. Future workload can be reduced by entering Toolkit plans now, rather than waiting for fund allocation and eventual ranking determinations.
3. **Hold Local and Area Work Group meetings** (FO, Area Offices). The goal is to have LWG and Area work group meetings completed by March 1, 2004. Coordinate with your SWCD. Have local input or listening sessions prior to, or in conjunction with the LWG meetings as needed.
4. **Complete and submit the Local and Area Work Group Development worksheet** (FO, AO). Utilize the LWG process to set local/area resource priorities. See details below.
5. **Complete and submit the Local and Area EQIP Application Scoring worksheet** (FO, AO). See details below
6. **Enter Local and Area EQIP worksheets on the web** (State Office).
7. **Utilize Toolkit and Protracts** to complete the process of obligating funds, signing contracts, and tracking the program (FO, AO, SO).

As in 2003 every locations' EQIP program must be on the web before any contracts can be awarded. The following items will speed the process of getting each of the 91 local and 7 area programs onto the web site.

Local Work Group Development worksheet:

1. The items you document must accurately describe your local/area program. Anyone accessing the web must be able to understand your program, including any policies, priorities, and how you will score the applications. Document any deletions to the State cost-share docket.
2. Expand the one-page format as necessary to accurately describe your EQIP.
3. The DC must submit your Local Work Group worksheet as an electronic file through your Area Office. Rename the file to "eqip 04XXX" with your 3 digit county code in place of the XXX. These files will be converted to pdf format at the state office and posted to the web site. Keep the signed copy in your local office file.
4. The Area must submit your Area Work Group worksheet as an electronic file. Rename the file to "eqip 04AOX" with your area number in place of the X.

EQIP Application Scoring worksheet

The 2004 Scoring worksheet, along with the 2004 cost-share docket will be provided to each office shortly. Minor edits are still being made to each. Additional instructions will be provided at that time.

Questions should be directed to your Area Conservationist or from the area level to Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

Attachment

DIST: AC
DC
ARC
EQIP State Office Team