

A Guide for Districts in Requesting Funding from County Government

1. Tabulate District Service to Localities and Land Owners

A. *Collect and Compile Information*

Appoint individuals or a committee to collect and compile information on miles of terraces, acres strip cropped, waterways, farm plans developed, assistance to land owners other than farmers, work conducted with public utilities in stabilizing right-of-ways, the number of watersheds developed and the cost savings the county realizes by not having to clean out road ditches. Consult with NRCS, Extension, and FSA in gathering such data. Use information on work on forestry. Put dollar value on all previous assistance and practices (yearly if possible, and total). Since counties tax, show them the benefit they get back in dollars.

B. *Estimate Economic Impact*

Estimate the economic impact on the community because of salaries paid to personnel living or working within the community who work with or assist districts. Use yearly estimate and total. i.e. the average one-person field office costs around \$150,000. Those are federal dollars coming into the community.

C. *Calculate District Official Contribution*

Point out contribution of time given by them in working on conservation activities. Establish yearly and total value to the county.

2. Tabulate Local Jurisdiction Assistance to Districts

Contact County Clerk, County Executive, Treasurer, or other appropriate official requesting a search of records for exact amount of all past appropriations, utilities, office space provided and other assistance to the district. Convert this to actual dollar value of what the County has contributed to assist the district.

3. Compare Benefits to Funding

Compare the value of conservation practices applied in the County to the funding provided by the County to the district. Show the value of results received and of achievements resulting from district activities and leadership.

4. Prepare Packet

Assemble information explained above and include copies of information such as the long-range plan, annual plan of work and other appropriate material and provide it each year.

5. Visit Local Decision Makers

Have at least one district official visit each member of the County Board, hand-deliver the informational packet, explain what is being done and discuss district activities. The district official should be accompanied by an NRCS or district employee to aid in answering technical questions.

6. Develop District Budget

Carefully consider the district needs and later prepare and attempt to justify a realistic and meaningful district budget.

7. Present Budget Request to County Government

Make budget presentation for annual request for appropriations at the appropriate time as established by the County Board.

8. Follow Up

Each year, visits should be made to deliver copies of annual reports and plan of work to show what has been done with money appropriated and visit often throughout the year.

Some Keys to Seeking Funds from County Government

Two Universal Aspirations

1. Everyone wants to be loved, admired, remembered favorably, treated fairly and never played down. In short, people want to be "sought". This includes politicians.
2. Everyone needs to feel he is "a worthwhile member of a worthwhile group". Including politicians.

Based on these two aspirations, it behooves a district to begin an involvement process at the earliest possible time; seeking, in particular, to personally identify these people with the programs as widely as may be possible.

People who have funds start committing themselves to personal identification at the moment they make a move that expresses open interest or desire. That is why the evangelist always wants the converts to come forward.

Some Axioms That Go With This Process

- ✓ Seek their advice or opinion
- ✓ Promote meaningful visitation
- ✓ Ask them to join
- ✓ Quote them, with adequate visibility
- ✓ Ask them to speak at your events
- ✓ Seek their testimony
- ✓ Use their names
- ✓ Take their pictures.
- ✓ Pay attention.

Six Deadly Sins Of Asking County Boards For Money

1. **Ad-libbing:** no study, no planning, no preparation, no consultation, no organization before you make your request.
2. **Panhandling:** asking for support merely because you need the money. No explanation that details the amount given.
3. **Automation:** human part of the request gives way to mechanics. Request is abdicated to the postman.
4. **Averaging:** accent on a percentage increase or just plan averages usually leads to cuts or no increases.
5. **Pessimism:** more often than not, we aim too low and plead rather than request. Whenever you let them know things aren't going well, the chances are everything will stop right there.
6. **Parsimony:** the good omelet needs enough broken eggs. More often than not, costs are estimated too low.

In Addition, County Boards Need To Understand:

1. That a district is a legal body, accountable to the public through general elections;
2. That districts have a sound accounting and audit system;
3. That districts created by the people were created to rely on public funds including those from counties; and
4. District Boards are capable of setting priorities, administering programs and making hard decisions.