



2025 Request for Applications

About

National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) Conservation Champions program offers grants up to **\$15,000** for farmers and outreach partners to learn about and develop *creative outreach strategies* that target new farmer audiences and increase the rate of soil health practice adoption. **This opportunity is currently only open to producers operating in the state of South Carolina.**

Who are Conservation Champions?

Conservation Champions teams are groups of innovative growers or livestock producers and local outreach partners that want to see sustainable agriculture practices become mainstream. Teams are passionate about conservation agriculture and invested in sharing the importance and value of sustainable practices with growers in their communities. **A Conservation Champion team should consist of three members or more, including at least one producer champion and one outreach champion.**

Producer champions are farmers or livestock producers who personally use conservation practices, know their benefits, and have soil health as a primary mission. They do not need to have experience with outreach, but should have an interest in engaging neighbors and peers to promote conservation practices and be enthusiastic about learning new communications skills.

Outreach Champions are agricultural or natural resource professionals from outreach-focused organizations including conservation districts, university extension, farmer unions, coalitions, co-ops and more. Outreach champions usually serve as the point of contact for the team and support producer champions in planning and implementing outreach.



What are *creative outreach strategies*?

Field days, workshops, and other soil health events that relay valuable information about conservation practice management and benefits have been successful in reaching innovative farmers, but progress in adoption of these practices has stalled. New, creative outreach needs to focus on reaching beyond this choir of producers who usually show up at events, and engage more resistant audiences.

Past experiences, social cues, and economics all combine to shape operator decisions. Collaborative, community-based approaches that reduce cultural, technical, and economic barriers to implementation will be most effective at substantially increasing conservation adoption. Your proposal should identify:

- New audiences you want to engage. (What are their values and motivations? What are their operations like?)
- Barriers to conservation practice adoption among these audiences. (What is stopping them from adopting conservation: social norms, values, management systems?)
- And describe how your plan will help overcome these barriers. (As an example, outreach might include re-framing conservation as a risk management strategy or as a component of farm legacy planning.)

NWF's expertise in social and behavioral science will supplement your farming knowledge and on-the-ground experience to collaboratively develop strategies that appeal to the mindsets and motivations of new audiences. The creative possibilities for your outreach are endless, and funding is flexible to support any creative ideas your team develops.

This is **not** a grant to fund the type of outreach that you are already doing. This is a targeted outreach program, grounded in social science, specifically designed to encourage non-adopters to start using soil health practices. Experienced NWF staff are here to help you design and implement new outreach approaches to expand and strengthen your outreach impact. We believe that conservation systems can work on all farms and that lack of widespread adoption stems from a communication problem, not a lack of knowledge.



What does this grant offer?

- Each team can request up to \$15,000 to cover the costs of their 18 month outreach plan (Winter 2025 through Spring 2027). This can be spent on staff time, stipends, travel, materials, advertisement, food, etc.
- Outreach and messaging training that imparts the latest in agricultural outreach science to equip Champions with knowledge and skills for outreach success.
- Year-round, individual support from National Wildlife Federation staff.
- Access to an established network of past and present Champions across the United States which offers continued learning, access to updated resources, and opportunities for future collaboration.

What are Champion responsibilities?

- Each team must carry out creative outreach activities over 18 months as proposed in their application and approved by NWF.
- Each team is responsible for directly reaching at least 200 farmers with messages on soil health and conservation practices.
- At least three members of each team must attend an in-person outreach and messaging training to be held in early December, 2025 (exact dates TBD). All costs associated with attending this training will be covered by NWF.
- All members of a champion team are required to view Fall 2025 training webinars hosted by NWF.
- Champions will develop and submit event plans for NWF feedback and approval after completing the training.
- Outreach impact must be measured according to NWF guidance. This will include standardized event surveys and self-reported metrics including tracking acreage influenced. NWF staff will assist with evaluation efforts to help you demonstrate the impact of your outreach activities.
- Champions are expected to engage in a listserv and regularly scheduled semi-monthly meetings, including individual and team check-ins and topic focused discussions.
- Champions will be required to complete a mid-term report by August 1, 2026 and a final report by May 1, 2027.
- All activities must be completed by May 1, 2027.



To apply:

- Submit a proposal addressing the application questions below.
- Include an estimated budget for the requested funding amount.
- Email proposal and budget to Cassidy Dellorto-Blackwell [dellortoblackwellc@nwf.org] by **Monday, June 30, 2025**.
- Selections will be made August 1, and the program will officially begin in September 2025.

How will applications be ranked?

Proposals will be ranked based on estimated impact, feasibility of completion and cost-benefit ratio. Teams that have not participated as Champions before or teams with at least two new members will be prioritized.

Questions?

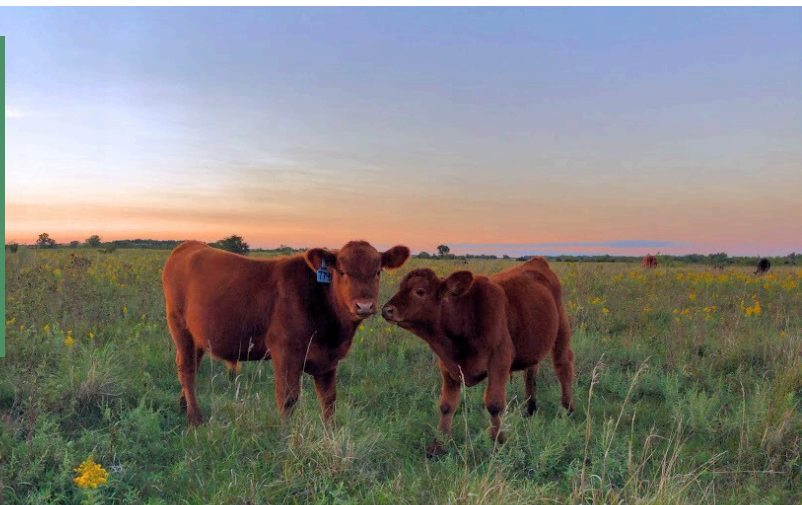
Contact Cassidy at DellortoBlackwellC@nwf.org

Application Questions:

- Applicant name and contact information (organization if applicable, phone, email, address)
- List of team participants, with each designated as **outreach** or **farmer** champion.
- Explain your team's qualifications and/or experience with soil health practices (less than 300 words, in paragraph form or bullet points).
- Explain your plan for your team to reach at least 200 farmers with messages on soil health practices.
- Explain why your outreach plan will reach non-adopters better than conventional outreach.
- Identify the biggest challenges to success you anticipate.
- Provide a timeline or estimate (Month & Year) for when each major activity will be completed. Events and activities should take place throughout 2026 and and be **completed by May 2027**.
- Estimate your budget. There is a limit of **\$15,000** in total expenditures for each application. Please categorize each line item as: Salary, Benefits, Travel, Meetings/ Events, Printing/ Electronic, Postage, Supplies, or Other. **Note:** for staff time, please separate salary and benefits if applicable. Farmer stipends do not need to be separated. See budget example on next page.

Want to learn more before applying?

Join us for an informational webinar Friday, May 9, 2025 at 10:00 am (eastern time). Register at <https://shorturl.at/f1UJp>



SAMPLE BUDGET – YOUR ITEMS AND AMOUNTS WILL VARY

Item	Category	Description	Amount
Outreach partner salary for contributed time	Salaries	6 days (48 total hours over grant period @ \$30/hour) for communications with farmer Champions, preparing presentations and educational materials, event logistic, etc.	\$1,440
Outreach partner associated benefits	Benefits	Calculated at 25% of salary	\$360
Farmer stipends for contributed time	Salaries	2 farmers x 7 days (56 hours @ \$50/hour) for attending events, preparing for speaking engagements, etc.	\$2,800
Travel expenses	Travel	2 Farmers + 1 Outreach partner travel to 4 speaking engagements (\$500/trip on average)	\$2,000
Event space rental	Meetings/ Events	4 events @ \$500/day	\$2,000
Snacks, water, lunches	Meetings/ Events	4 events @ \$400/event	\$1,200
Infiltration test kit	Supplies	For demonstrating cover crop benefits at field days	\$300
Event advertisement	Printing/ electronic	Printing materials, supplies, social media advertisement	\$1,000
TOTAL			\$9,300