

**PREPARATION**

- ❖ Timeframes
  - Know when NRCS ALE/WRE ranking deadlines occur; aim for earliest date
  - 1+ year to fully prepare application; 2-3 years to complete project
- ❖ NRCS Eligibility
  - Are the land and entity eligible?
    - 50% Soils, 66% Forestland, state/local policy
    - Who is the best entity to hold ALE?
- ❖ Appraisals
  - Critical step to project development – If possible, do early and choose appraiser with experience
  - NRCS must review appraisal within 6 months of cooperative agreement or 12 months of closing
- ❖ Landowner Considerations
  - Deed language (Minimum Deed Terms, Model Easements, Templates, Reserved Rights)
  - Purchase & Sales Agreements (include deed language from above)
  - Bargain sale? (0% - 25%)
  - Exclusion areas & building envelopes

**APPLICATION**

- ❖ Ranking
  - “Do it yourself” (then share info with NRCS)
  - Seek out additional points (business/succession plan, conservation land/practices, ag infrastructure)
- ❖ Project size
  - Multiple applications with varying values
  - Staging (if too large, break into manageable projects (don’t negatively affect eligibility, ranking, etc))
  - WRE Option (watch out for timing/funding issues)

**FUNDRAISING & GRANTS**

- ❖ Project Budget
  - Estimate all known costs (use contingency for 1-2%)
  - Matching funds (public/private grants, donors, bargain sale, etc)
    - Allocating eligible grant expenses (flexible > rigid)

**ACQUISITION**

- ❖ Cooperative Agreement (rules, deadlines, and knowing when/how to coordinate with NRCS)
- ❖ Timing of Due Diligence
  - Maximize efficiency by proper sequencing (title, phase 1, survey, deed)
  - Plan for delays/unexpected issues (title, mortgage, boundaries)
  - Survey: exclusions, building envelopes, subdivisions, lot line/boundary issues
  - ALE Plan (start early; get feedback from NRCS and landowner)
- ❖ Minimum Deed Terms
  - Use template if possible (allows for in-state review)
  - Subdivision (decide early; complete before closing)
  - Grassland bird provision (be aware; avoid if possible; use cropland as land use)
- ❖ NRCS Review & Closing
  - Takes time! (If possible, do prior reviews by all other funders first)
  - Baseline preparation and review
  - Requesting advance to escrow account